

**THE INTERPLAY OF GEO-POLITICS AND GEO-ECONOMICS IN FOREIGN POLICY OF PAKISTAN: IMPERATIVES, CONSTRAINTS AND POTENTIALS**



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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving **family**, whose unwavering support and belief in the power of education have illuminated my path. To my **parents**, for their sacrifices and wisdom that have been the driving forces behind my achievements. To my **spouse**, whose patience, understanding, and love have been my greatest sources of strength. To my **children**, who inspire me daily, reminding me of the importance of our shared future. To my **mentors, teachers and colleagues**, for their invaluable insights and guidance. This accomplishment is a testament to our collective journey, a journey marked by love, support, and a commitment to making a positive impact in the world.

# **CERTIFICATION**

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## **FORWARDING SHEET**

The thesis entitled “The Interplay of Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics in Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Imperatives, Constraints, and Potentials”, submitted by Muhammad Jahanzaib (Reg. No. 50-FSS/PHDIR/S21) is partial fulfilment of PhD degree in social sciences with specialization in International Relations has been completed under my guidance and supervision. I am satisfied with the quality of student’s research work and allow him to submit this thesis for further process as per IIUI-rules and regulations.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

APTTA	Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASANO	Association of Southeast Asian Nations Organization
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CEPA	Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
CBMs	Confidence-Building Measures
FTAs	Free Trade Agreements
FII	Future Investment Initiative
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IP-PTA	Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement
IPTA	Iran-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement
IMCTC	Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition
MPPTA	Malaysia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement
NAM	Non-Align Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
JBC	Pakistan-Egypt Joint Business Council
PTAP	Pakistan Technical Assistance Program
PRC	People's Republic of China
PTAs	Preferential Trade Agreements

QCG	Quadrilateral Coordination Group
QTTA	Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RCD	Regional Cooperation for Development
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Corporation
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
SAFTA	South Asia Free Trade Area
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organization
SCO	Shanghai Corporation Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TAPA	Technical Assistance Program for Africa

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## ABSTRACT

*This thesis explores the dynamic interplay between geo-politics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy, emphasizing the transition from geopolitical priorities to geo-economic strategies. Initially, Pakistan's foreign engagements were heavily influenced by geopolitical factors, such as regional alliances and security concerns, up until 2008. Post-2008, the research highlights a strategic shift towards emphasizing economic drivers like trade, investment, and regional connectivity, symbolized by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This project illustrates the potential for economic growth and regional integration while acknowledging associated environmental and geopolitical challenges. Adopting a neo-liberal framework, the study assesses this shift's effects on Pakistan's relationships with major powers, neighboring countries, and the Muslim world, revealing a complex web of geopolitical and geo-economic interdependencies. Despite the rising prominence of economic considerations, the thesis argues that geopolitical factors still significantly influence Pakistan's foreign policy, necessitating a nuanced approach that integrates both elements. The findings offer insights into the evolving nature of Pakistan's foreign policy, driven by objectives of economic growth, security, and regional clout in a globally interconnected landscape. Recommendations include diversifying foreign relations, improving domestic economic conditions, and enhancing participation in international institutions to manage this transition effectively.*

## **Introduction**

The introduction chapter of this dissertation provides an overview of the background of the study, the problem statement, the significance of the study, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the delimitations of the study, literature review, research gap, brief theoretical framework, research methodology and organization of the study. It sets the stage for the rest of the dissertation by providing context and devising the need of the research.

Within the preview of the introduction, background of the study is presented that highlights Pakistan's strategic position in the global geopolitical and geo-economics landscape, and the interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics that shape its foreign policy. The problem statement emphasized the need for a comprehensive examination of the foreign policy of Pakistan within the framework of geopolitics and geo-economics applying the lens of neo-liberalism, particularly focusing on the post-2008 era and its impact on Pakistan's relations with major powers, Muslim countries and neighboring states. The significance of the study outlined how it contributes to the existing body of knowledge and enhances our understanding of Pakistan's foreign policy in the context of geopolitics and geo-economics.

The objectives of the study include analyses of the foreign policy of Pakistan during the period from 1947 to 2008 in terms of geo-politics and geo-economics; examination of the interplay between geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy post-2008; analyses of the impacts of this interplay and transition from geo-politics to geo-economics; and exploring the national imperatives, constraints, and potentials in the context of this interplay. Accordingly, the research questions are developed, seeking to

address the key aspects of the study and provide a structure for the subsequent analysis. Delimitations of the study are exhibited, ensuring the research remains manageable and focused, review of existing literature is sequential to find the research gap. Theoretical framework based on neo-liberalism is briefly explained. Research methodology that opts for qualitative research case study design is elucidated. Lastly, this segment touches the organization of the study.

## **1. Background of the Study**

Pakistan, strategically located at the crossroads of South Asia, has long been a pivotal player in regional and international geopolitics. Since gaining independence in 1947, the country has faced ongoing political instability, security challenges, and economic crises (Hussain, 2020). Historically, Pakistan's foreign policy has prioritized geopolitical and geo-strategic concerns, leading to significant regional influence despite internal struggles (Paul, 2018). However, this emphasis on security and politics has hindered the country's economic development, with challenges such as low GDP growth, a widening trade deficit, and increasing external debt (Hagerty, 1998; Sadaf et al., 2023).

In recent years, there has been growing recognition that Pakistan's geopolitical focus has impacted its geo-economics. Calls for reshaping foreign policy to balance both aspects are gaining traction (Keohane & Nye, 2011). As global political dynamics shift towards regional cooperation and interdependence, Pakistan is adjusting by forging stronger economic and political ties with key neighbors and Muslim nations (Sargana & Sargana, 2020).

Pakistan's foreign policy has historically been dominated by geostrategic concerns, particularly during the Cold War and the War on Terror. However, the shift towards

economic priorities, emphasized in the National Security Policy of 2022, marks a critical juncture (GoP, 2022). Projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) reflect this shift, positioning Pakistan as a potential gateway for Central Asian trade, though concerns over financing remain (Afzal & Naseem, 2018; Sareen, 2016).

This dissertation explores the intersection of geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy, examining its implications for economic growth and international relations. By analyzing historical trends and future prospects, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Pakistan can leverage its strategic position to achieve sustained economic stability.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The economic condition of Pakistan remained in a critical state, with the country faced financial challenges such as low foreign reserves, decreased GDP growth, a substantial trade deficit, an alarming level of circular debt in the energy sector, and mounting external debt. Historically, Pakistan's foreign policy has been shaped by geopolitical and geostrategic concerns, often influenced by external factors or blurred self-interests. However, recent global and regional dynamics necessitate a shift towards geo-economic priorities. This study seeks to understand how this transition impacts Pakistan's foreign policy, particularly in reconciling geopolitical imperatives with geo-economic needs. The problem lies in analyzing how Pakistan can balance these two forces within its foreign policy, especially given evolving international relationships and regional dynamics. By focusing on fostering positive political and economic ties with neighboring, major, and Muslim countries, Pakistan can potentially improve its economic, political and security situation. This research provides insights into the implications of the intended

geopolitical-to-geo-economic shift, offering a nuanced understanding of Pakistan's position and strategy in the global landscape.

### **3. Significance of the Study**

This research enhances our understanding of Pakistan's foreign policy by exploring the interaction between geopolitics and geo-economics. The study holds significance for decision-makers, scholars, and international relations practitioners by providing insights into how a more cooperative, neo-liberal approach could improve Pakistan's political and economic policies. These insights can guide policymakers in fostering stronger ties with other nations, contributing to Pakistan's economic stability and prosperity.

The research adds valuable knowledge to the field of international relations and political economy by shedding light on Pakistan's foreign policy dynamics, especially given its economic struggles compared to other nations with similar histories. The study can serve as a foundation for further research, stimulating deeper inquiries into the geopolitics-geo-economics nexus.

Practitioners such as diplomats, negotiators, and lobbyists can benefit from the findings to better analyze and navigate Pakistan's foreign policy landscape. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding Pakistan's economic and political constraints, enabling more productive interactions on the international stage. It also encourages Pakistan to engage in constructive regional cooperation, which can potentially foster a more prosperous and stable environment for all. By leveraging these insights, stakeholders can identify innovative strategies to strengthen not only Pakistan's global standing but also mutual benefits.

#### **4. Objectives of the Study**

This research was aimed to achieve the following objectives:-

- a. To briefly analyze the traditional foreign policy of Pakistan from 1947 to 2008.
- b. To ascertain the interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics in the foreign policy of Pakistan post 2008.
- c. To ascertain the impacts of intended transition from geopolitics to geo-economics on the foreign policy of Pakistan.
- d. To evaluate the interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics considering the national imperatives, constraints, and potentials.

#### **5. Research Questions**

This dissertation looked for answers of the following research questions:-

- a. What remained the traditional foreign policy of Pakistan (1947 – 2008)?
- b. What are the contours of the interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics in the foreign policy of Pakistan post 2008?
- c. What are the impacts of the intended transition from geo-politics to geo-economics on the foreign policy of Pakistan?
- d. How do geo-politics and geo-economics interplay considering the national imperatives, constraints, and potentials of Pakistan?

#### **6. Delimitation(s) of the Study**

This research, due to its immense scope and multifaceted nature, has a few delimitations as:

The research specifically concentrates on the post-2008 period, with a brief examination of the historical context prior pre-2008. This chosen timeframe excludes minor developments in Pakistan's geo-politics and geo-economics, meaning not every factor or shifts in foreign policy is covered within the study.

The study focuses primarily on Pakistan's relationships with major powers, neighboring countries and Muslim states. While these are key players in Pakistan's foreign policy, this delimitation omits the influence of other important regional or global actors that may also shape Pakistan's political and economic dynamics.

The study was constrained by the availability of data, particularly in areas involving sensitive government documents (e.g., classified materials), diplomatic communications, and unverified economic data. These limitations restricted access to certain critical information that could have enriched the analysis.

The results of this study are specific to Pakistan's context and may not directly apply to other countries, given the unique political, economic and cultural environments of each nation. This delimitation should be taken into account when analyzing the findings and drawing broader conclusions.

## **7. Literature Review**

This literature review provided a comprehensive overview of the existing research on Pakistan's foreign policy, geo-politics, and geo-economics, with a focus on the post-2008 era. The review covered the major contours of the interplay in evaluating Pakistan's political and economic foreign policies. Through the examination of various studies, the aim was to identify gaps in the existing literature, and highlight areas where the research could contribute new insights or perspectives.

According to '*Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*' by Grahame Thompson. In the modern world, the nation state is seen as the dominant geographic entity. It is used to characterize a state's position in world societal, intellectual, political, and financial frameworks. Nation states are shaped by their political, economic, and social environments and thus have unique contextual identities. They engage in geopolitical and geo-economics activities by interacting with one another to meet their respective economic and political needs (Thompson, 1999).

In '*The Radical Geopolitics of US foreign policy: the 2003 Iraq War*' by Julien Mercille. The author explained that since financial objectives and economics play a significant role in comprehending geopolitical conditions, the relationship between economics and geopolitics is considered as logical. Wars waged for control of resources like oil or arable land, as the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Gulf War in 1992, were two instances frequently quoted (Mercille, 2010). In his analysis of geopolitical conflicts, whether military or non-military, inter or intra-state, involving many actors or just a few, or occurring in a large or small territory, researchers tend to place less emphasis on economics as a source of conflict. However, the relationship is not always clear-cut but mostly linked to economy.

The work of '*The Limitations of Economics in Understanding the Geopolitics of Conflicts in Developing Countries*' by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos revealed that many geopolitical conflicts were not economically motivated and instead result from power battles over regions and the people who occupy them. However, it also holds that, whether they include little or vast regions, geopolitical situations and contexts would assist economists' studies (Montclos, 2013). Moreover, economic study frequently disregarded

the particulars of geography, colonization, and the interaction between civilizations and the state. One of the myths of economic science is that the market can operate everywhere in the same manner, as if it were independent of context. The failure of previous development theories to take context into account and the use of different strategies by countries experiencing economic growth than those advised by international institutions' economists can both be attributed to the notion.

The key takeaway from '*Historical-Geopolitical Contexts and the Transformation of Chinese Foreign Policy*' by Colin Flint and Zhang Xiaotong is that understanding the geopolitical and economic circumstances in which foreign policy decisions are made is essential to comprehending both world politics and economics. While context awareness is not deterministic, it implied that options are constrained within a given context (Flint & Xiaotong, 2019).

In '*Trade wars and the changing international order: a crisis of globalization?*' by Valentin Mihaylov and Sławomir Sitek, authors explained that the world economy is changing as a result of current geopolitical conflicts. Sanctions policy currently dominates international affairs and economic competition has replaced armed conflict as the main mode of conflict. Trade competition, restrictions on natural resources, and financial disputes have taken the role of traditional elements including political agreements, territorial control, arms races, and monetary conflicts (Mihaylov & Sitek, 2021).

In '*The structuration of Russia's geo-economy under economic sanctions*' by Pami Aalto and Tuomas Forsberg, and '*The Geopolitics of Global Energy Security*' by Michael J. Bradshaw explain explained that worldwide, geo-economics is expanding, and economic globalization is what is fueling this progress. Governments, advocacy organizations, and

businesses face difficulties as a result of geo-economics, such as those faced by Russia in its attempts to defend itself from Western economies and US-led banking markets, China in its efforts to promote domestic consumption, the US in its pursuit of energy independence, and Germany in its attempts to maintain its financial stability (Aalto & Forsberg, 2016; Bradshaw, 2009).

In *'Pakistan: Militancy, the Transition to Democracy and Future Relations with the United States'* by Saeed Shafqat contended that countries' physical locations play a significant role in establishing its geostrategic significance. There are benefits and drawbacks to a state's geographical position. Geographic importance influences a state's standing in international politics and is advantageous to other countries in the social, economic and political realms. Pakistan is strategically located at the junction of West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia. It is surrounded by Afghanistan, China, India, and Iran, four significant countries that have a significant influence on global affairs. Due of its proximity to two major world powers, China and Russia, Pakistan is also especially intriguing. Despite its strategic dominance (Shafqat, 2009).

Dr. Ali Muhammad Bhat in his work *'Great Game in Central Asia: Humanity at Venture'* and *'Sino-Pakistan Friendship, Changing South Asian Geopolitics and India's Post-Obama Options'* by Parvaiz Ahmad and Bawa Singh, upheld the significance of Pakistan in the "New Great Game" as well as its role as a front-line country in the war against terrorism, Pakistan has been unable to fully capitalize on the economic advantages its location affords. Given the state's current economic predicament, this is a need. Important factors that influence the country's foreign policy include its relations to Muslim

countries, its historical rivalry with India, and the influence of regional powers like China and the United States (Bhat, 2023; Ahmad & Singh, 2017).

The interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics significantly influences Pakistan's foreign policy. Article 40 of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) underscores the state's commitment to promoting peace, solidarity, and international cooperation, which has been a guiding principle in shaping its diplomatic engagements, particularly within the Muslim world and the United Nations (Constitution, 1974).

The foreign relations of Pakistan from 1947 to 2008 have been shaped by its geographical location, security concerns and ideological foundations. Hussain (1983) in '*Pakistan: Problems of Governance*' emphasizes the challenges Pakistan faced in balancing its ties with global superpowers during the Cold War era, particularly aligning with the United States through military pacts like SEATO and CENTO (Hussain & Hussain, 1993).

Similarly, Sattar (2007) in '*Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947–1997: A Concise History*' details Pakistan's quest for security and economy, particularly in the context of its enduring rivalry with India. The author highlights pivotal moments such as Pakistan's rapprochement with China in the 1960s and its instrumental role in facilitating U.S.-China relations in 1971. He also discusses the repercussions of Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan jihad and its strategic partnerships with the Gulf States (Sattar, 2007). These works collectively provide a foundational understanding of Pakistan's foreign policy imperatives and its oscillation between strategic alignments and economic diplomacy during the pre-2000 period.

Post-2008, Pakistan's engagement in projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) showcased the fusion of economic and geopolitical interests as detailed by authors in '*CPEC – Geo-Politics to Geo-Economics*' (Muhammad et al., 2022). Also, mentioned that Pakistan has undergone a significant shift in its foreign policy from geopolitics to geo-economics.

Pakistan's foreign policy has placed a greater emphasis on regional connectivity and economic diplomacy. This change is necessitated by the need to deal with the country's economic problems, which include slow growth rates, significant unemployment, and a growing debt load as deliberated in '*CPEC and Regional Connectivity: Navigating the South Asian Politics*' by Muhammad Faisal and '*China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Regional Cooperation in the Wider South Asian Region*' by Siegfried O. Wolf. Through projects like China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and other agreements, Pakistan has sought to take advantage of its geostrategic location to promote regional economic integration (Faisal, 2019; Wolf, 2018).

Pakistan's relationships with major powers, notably the United States, Russia, and China, significantly shape its foreign policy's geopolitics and geo-economics. The country's alliance with the United States, underscored by security assistance and counter-terrorism efforts, has witnessed numerous highs and lows over the years as illustrated in '*Reframing the US-Pakistan Strategic Renaissance*' by Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur (Ganguly & Kapur, 2023).

Pakistan's relations with Russia, although historically strained, have seen a gradual warming, with potential for economic and military cooperation in '*The Evolution of Russia-Pakistan Relations in the Context of Regional Cooperation: A Contemporary Study*' by

Sahera Khatoon, Zahoor Khan and Abdul Haq (Khatoon, Khan, & Haq, 2023). Moreover, in '*China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Ensuring Pakistan's Economic Benefits*' authors explained Pakistan's relationship with China as characterized by a deep and multifaceted strategic partnership, recently amplified by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Ali, 2019).

The relationships between Pakistan and its neighboring states - namely India, Afghanistan, and Iran – are multifaceted, influenced by both geopolitical and geo-economics considerations. The geopolitical landscape of these relationships is complex, marked by territorial disputes, competing security interests, and historical tensions, most notably with India and Afghanistan as discussed in '*Geopolitical Dynamics in the Afghanistan–India–Pakistan Triangle*' by Zahoor Ahmad Wani (Wani, 2022). At the same time, geo-economic factors, including trade opportunities, energy security, and regional connectivity, are increasingly shaping these relations deliberated in '*Trade as an Instrument of Peace Building (Pakistan, Afghanistan and India)*' by Noreen Naseer (Naseer, 2014).

Due to their multiple ties and regional concerns, such as Iran's strong cooperation with India and Pakistan's strategic ties with Saudi Arabia, the two countries have also struggled to maintain a balanced relationship as edifice by Umer Karim in '*The Pakistan–Iran relationship and the changing nature of regional and domestic security and strategic interests*'. In spite of these difficulties, Pakistan and Iran retain diplomatic connections and look for ways to cooperate, demonstrating how important geo-economics and geopolitics are in shaping their bilateral relations (Karim, 2023).

In *'Pakistan's Evolving Relations with Saudi Arabia: Emerging Dynamics and Challenges'* by Rashid Ahmed Siddiqi and *'Labour Migration from Pakistan to the Gulf Countries: An Investigation of Regional Disparities in Outflows of Workers, Remittances and Poverty'* by G. M. Arif, Shujaat Farooq & Nasir Iqbal, the authors explained that Pakistan's foreign policy has prioritized its ties to Muslim countries, particularly those in the Middle East. Pakistan has kept tight links with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries because of factors like shared religious identity, economic cooperation, and labor migration (Siddiqi, 2019; Arif, Farooq, & Iqbal, 2019).

Pakistan has also taken part in international bodies like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in order to promote unity among Muslim countries and address common challenges like Islamophobia and counter-terrorism as deliberated in *'The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Defamation of Religions, and Islamophobia'* by Deborah Weiss (Weiss, 2011). Pakistan and Muslim countries (namely Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, and Indonesia) have close social, political, economic, and religious ties as mentioned in *'Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy'* by Jacob Abadi (Abadi, 2004).

Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Musharaf Zahoor reiterates in *'Bangladesh-Pakistan relations: hostage to a traumatic past'* that relations with Bangladesh has faced mixed relations due to unhealthy historical context (Ahmed & Zahoor, 2019). Whereas, the country is trying to actively promote trade and economic relations with Central Asian republics in addition to using practical approaches to address the situation in Afghanistan as studied in *'Pakistan and Central Asian Republics: Cooperation and Opportunities - Trade and Energy corridors: A Recipe of Prosperity for Pakistan and CARs'* by Abai

Zuridinov (Zuridinov, 2022). Pakistan has taken some steps for rapprochement with African countries but seeming not adequate as explained by Sadia Sulaiman in '*Economic Diplomacy in Africa: Options and Opportunities for Pakistan*'.

## **8. Research Gap (Gap of Knowledge)**

There was a lack of research on certain issues or questions in the field of the interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics of Pakistan. Previous studies and research have not fully addressed certain problems or questions. This study aimed to fill in these gaps by addressing the unresolved issues and answering the questions outlined in the research questions' section.

The existing literature on Pakistan's foreign policy has primarily focused on its security concerns, regional dynamics, and the role of major powers in shaping its strategic decisions (Paul, 2018). Very few studies have examined the influence of geo-economics on Pakistan's foreign policy. Moreover, there is a gap in the literature concerning the comprehensive analysis of the interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics with the prism of neo-liberalism in the post-2008 era and its implications for Pakistan's foreign policy.

This research is aimed at closure of this gap by assessing Pakistan's relations with major powers (USA, China, and Russia), neighbors (India, Afghanistan and Iran) and other Muslim states through the lens of evolving and interconnected global present day political and economic picture by applying the Neoliberal School of thought. The significant gaps in the literature that needed to be addressed included:

Shortage of research on the burgeoning role of Pakistan's foreign policy, as underscored by the emergence of new geo-economic realms and a set of altering global power configurations. Although, the previous literature might be providing something

about how Pakistan is modifying its foreign policy, however, it could not display an in-depth picture.

The inter-related nature of geopolitics and geo-economics since the year 2008 in Pakistan's foreign policy has not been adequately explored. The purpose of this research was to go and interpret more complexly the function of the factors that have influenced change to a more pragmatic and economic orientation in Pakistan's foreign policy.

Despite growing scholarly attention on the transition from geopolitics to geo-economics, the impacts of this shift remain underexplored or least deliberated. Where shift to geo-economics is discussed, the consequences of intended transitions, especially in the context of states like Pakistan, are insufficiently addressed. This gap highlights the need for comprehensive research that explains both the motives and outcomes of such shifts.

There still lies many potentials for Pakistan by using its geo-strategic location and its relationship with its neighbors, major powers and Muslim states catapult itself from economic challenges and vulnerabilities. This research, therefore, remained focused on identifying imperatives, constraints and potentials in Pakistan moving more towards an economic-centered foreign policy.

A need of a larger scope for more sophisticated looking at Pakistan's relations with the powerful countries such as Russia and Iran was desirable. The prevalent literature mostly specialized on the ties between Pakistan and the major power blocs like the United States, China and India, and undermined the efforts towards co-operations between our regional partners.

To fill these research gaps, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of Pakistan's geo-political and geo-economic relations in the context of evolving global

power structures. By addressing these gaps, this research contributed to a better understanding of Pakistan's foreign policy in a rapidly changing world. By identifying gaps in the literature and highlighting areas where the present research can contribute new insights or perspectives, this review settled the stage for a more in-depth analysis of Pakistan's foreign policy in the post-2008 era.

## **9. Theoretical Framework – Neo Liberalism**

Due to the fact that the study should clarify and provide necessary statistics when speaking about the nature of geo-politics and geo-economics and their collaborative work, it is necessary to evaluate the interpretative power of the International Relations (IR) theories which are presented comparatively to the mentioned contours. Neo-liberalism has been adopted as the theoretical framework for this dissertation. The essential theories and perceptions have succinctly been appraised in the following section, which is classical realism, neorealism and social constructivism to see why neo-liberalism is opted as the theory that is more preferable as a theoretical base of this present study than other theories (Sørensen, et al., 2022).

A classical realism, which also is a descendant of the Thucydides and Machiavelli proponents, is an approach, which expresses a pessimistic approach to human nature in that they view it as an inherently selfish and always power-hungry trait of people. Thus, the power shift context as well as the fight for survival on the anarchic world stage is the focal point of this realism (Forde, 1992). The classics realists stress that state's influence always exceeds the interests of an ordinary people and it behaves in accordance with its instinct of survival by striving for power (Sørensen, et al., 2022).

Such theorists maintain that a natural competition inherent in states is often mighty enough to cause conflicts and wars, where absence of morality affects international arena. This standpoint in fact presents the state sovereignty, national interests and power balance as the main key factors in deciding who is stronger and who is weaker as well as who stands where in the position of the international affairs (Schuett, 2010).

Neorealism, or structural realism, the school that derives from classical realism on the basis that the human nature contains a potential for rapid, and at times, violent transformation can now concentrate on the structural limitations imposed by the international system, rather than focusing exclusively on human nature (Bessner & Guilhot, 2015). Kenneth Waltz's neo realistic connotation implies that the anarchic structure of the international system (apparently, no central authority) inevitably situates states to build power based on the similarity of international security thinking (Sørensen, et al., 2022).

A key notion of neorealism is the prevalence of power created between the states, which puts specific international structure impact on state behavior instead of on other factors. The neo-realists are of the opinion that the states mainly for their survival selfishly work within the system's framework and that force them to take a self-reliance mechanism by means of guaranteeing their own security (Waltz, 1979).

Neorealism questions the role of motives like strategic interests, power struggles and geopolitical factors primarily play in determining a state's behavior. Typically, it prioritize military dominance and is robustness. The balance rather contributes to the structural deviation of anarchy not displaying on dealing with the economic stability (Guzzini, 1993). However, the stepping aside from defense and pure defense related ties in

favor of economic cooperation has been clearly visible in the foreign policy of the Pakistan (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023).

Moreover, noticeably, the contours of Pakistan foreign policy have discussed of late are mostly connected with the sphere of economics, such as the infrastructure, international trade, Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), energy cooperation and where private entrepreneurs, as well as State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) are seen as key players (Latief & Lefen, 2019). The neorealism is, therefore, in a sense is partially justified when Pakistan's foreign affairs are analyzed.

Moreover, the social constructivism stresses out the process containing the state's conducts that are influenced by the ideational factors of the behavior such as norms, identities, and beliefs as opposed to materials (Wendt, 1999). International relations, which are shaped by social constructivism, believe that nations' actions are to a large extent taken on the basis of ideational factors, including norms, identities, and thoughts, and the traditional understanding of the world is presented as being different in nature. This theory, which is forwarded by Alexander Wendt, accentuates the significance of commonality of ideas, meaning and social interaction in precisely defining the international system. Following this line of thought, it says that the states' behavior is not exclusively derived from their narrow or selfish interests; rather it is a manifestation of their understandings as to who they are and what their interests are at any given time (Agius, 2018).

Additionally, social constructivism puts a major accent on the genesis of states identities and their interactive ties with other actors through language, discourse and the common perceptions of the existing international order (Paris 1990). Social constructivism only offers to explain the policy of Pakistan taking into account non-material factors

including norms and beliefs and therefore, it is short on material factor, i.e., geopolitics and geo-economics. A country's historical background, the goals and dynamics of diplomatic relationships as well as their economic need are influential factors in the form of which bilateral relationship is constructed (Rahim & Kasi, 2020). Therefore, constructivism could not explain these factors.

Neo-liberalism or institutional liberalism is a theoretical perspective in country's relations that stresses that cooperation among states is possible and it can last over a long period of time and this may lower the odds of conflict and competition between states (Powell, 1994). The concept was denominated by the political scientist Robert Keohane in the 1990s.

Liberal institutionalism is a theory of international relations that emphasizes the role of international institutions and regimes in promoting cooperation and reducing conflict between states. Unlike other theories like realism, liberal institutionalism takes into account internal politics and the impact of democracy and capitalism on international relations. Proponents of this theory argue that democratic systems and capitalist economies promote peace and economic opportunities, and that cooperation can be sustained through repeated interactions, transparency, and monitoring (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Liberal institutionalists, like Robert Keohane, believe that the many govern and not the few in democratic systems and that this leads to peace. The theory also emphasizes the idea that friendly, democratic, and capitalist nations will negotiate mutually beneficial trade deals (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985).

The emergence of complex interactions and interdependence among states has drastically altered the landscape of international politics, according to Robert Keohane and

Joseph Nye. They acknowledged that the various and intricate transnational ties and dependencies between states and societies have grown, while the use of military force and power balancing have become less important but still play a vital role. (Keohane & Nye, 1998).

Complex interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 1973) is characterized by three characteristics:

a. Involving the use of multiple channels of action between societies in interstate, trans- governmental, and transnational relations.

b. The absence of a hierarchy of issues with changing agendas and linkages between issues prioritized.

c. The objective of bringing about a decline in the use of military force and coercive power in international relations.

The spotlight of this examination is the way political economy affects Pakistan's trade relations. Neoliberalism can help to analyze the empirical data of bilateral economical relationship (Maoz, 2009). It can, for examples, include trade, energy projects, technology transfers and potential investments. According to these transformations, these are economic plans that different countries keep so that they can improve market linkages in the changing geopolitics, especially in South Asia where Pakistani economy is facing more issues. Although the IMF's funding act as a bailout for the capital side of Islamabad, it still reinforces the country's use for foreign loans and aid. Seeking to diversify its economic downturn risks, Pakistan has broadly welcomed trade and energy cooperation under the BRI (CPEC) with China as well as with other countries (Ghutai et al., 2023; Chattha & Sayed, 2019).

Neo-liberalism has significantly influenced international relations by advocating for open markets and global trade. This ideology promotes the free movement of capital across borders, contributing to the formation of a more interconnected global economy (Sørensen et al., 2022). Neo-liberalism has also been instrumental in shaping international commerce through key institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and various regional trade agreements, which work to reduce trade barriers and foster economic integration (Hurt, 2012). In the realm of economic diplomacy, neo-liberalism emphasizes policies that prioritize trade agreements, international partnerships, and enhancing global competitiveness.

Neo-liberalism aims to achieve the objectives of shifting towards a global economy where the values of minimal regulation predominate by which states collaborate on economic matters to gain mutual benefit as interdependence and interconnection increases (Gromyko, 2020; Keohane & Nye, 1998).

For the relationships between Pakistan and other states, neo-liberalism is an appropriate lens, through their interaction in economic and diplomatic area. Many countries have enacted the elements of the neo-liberal economic concept, promoting investments aimed at their economies' enhancement and integration into regional and global agreements (Sørensen, et al., 2022). Neo-liberalism with its primary idea of privatization and growth through a market has affected their approach to economic policies as well as implementation of reforms in order to make the economies more competitive and dynamic.

Additionally, the association into international forums, regional pacts and collaborations signifies the "neo-liberal" approach in diplomacy focusing on global economic best interests and collective security just like the world has become today (Rauf,

2019). On the other hand, the social impacts of liberal policies on welfare system, revenue distribution, and domestic industrialization are variously taken as contentious issues, whereby domestic economics give and take with social equity to determine the complex relation between liberalization and social equity (Macdonald, 2014).

Beside the previously discussed theorizations, neoliberalism becomes an essential symbol of how economies are managed, taking advantage of the competitive power of free enterprise markets, price and regulation factors as well as the reduced role of the state in this field. Neo-liberalism affects not only a state's economic policy but international trade relations and global finance, as well (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985). It argues that market-driven policies can improve resource allocation, foster innovation and expand access to goods and services, ultimately contributing to social well-being and long-term sustainability when complemented by appropriate safeguards (Bessner & Guilhot, 2015).

Nations prefer trade and economic collaboration with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) which have a completed toolkit of the neo-liberal economic model to play a dual role as both economic channels and geopolitical instruments (Chorev & Babb, 2009). Institutions of global significance like the IMF, the World Bank, and the regional development banks all have a great influence among the states of the world, through giving the loans, financial assistance and technical assistance (Mansoor, et al., 2023).

Propositionally, civil society is now one of the crucial powers, especially in the economic sphere of global affairs. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Multi-National Companies (MNCs) and activist organizations as well as grassroots movements are integrating themselves more and more into the framework of global economic policies, advocating for human rights, environmental sustainability and fair trade practices (Acar,

K., 2023). Their power goes beyond borders to rule the behaviors, priorities, and strategies of governments and intergovernmental organizations (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The theoretical framework review is illustrated to indicate that the other conventional international relations theories mainly realism, neo-realism and constructivism, are unable to account fully for current international developments and the economic harmonization stocks of Pakistan (Sørensen, et al., 2022). Neo-liberalism appears as the core framework at the basis of this research addressing the issue of the application of a range of different economic tools in modern international relations (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The lens of Neo-Liberal Theory is being utilized in this research to answer all of our research questions. To guide the analysis, this research adopts a theoretical and conceptual framework, a perspective that emphasizes the role of international institutions, cooperation, and complex interdependence in shaping state behavior (Powell, 1994; Keohane & Martin, 1995; Keohane & Nye, 1998). By applying the glasser of Neo-Liberal Theory, this study dived deeply into what problems arise in state relations and how they can benefit each other by mitigating the issues arising in the relations of countries to the benefit of all that enhance the wellbeing of state, people and develop the economies of the counties.

Emphasizing Neo-Liberalism conceptual framework with regards to incorporated into the subject matter of the dissertation, it obtained a theoretical task of considering how the essence of liberal institutionalism is used in order to describe the new shift in the foreign policy of Pakistan towards the geo-economics (Sørensen, et al., 2022; Luttwak, 1990). This theoretical framework is adopted as a tool for analysis that helped perceive the

transformation of Pakistan's foreign policy after 2008. This period characterizes a very important static period where economic motivators and mutual co-operation between states have progressively circumscribed the diplomatic activities.

The shift in the policy, within the context of the democracy governance in Pakistan, calls for a review of the country's strategic policies to have an in-line with its political structure and economic goals. The spilling over of neo-liberal ideals within this context suggests that the way forward for Pakistan as far as foreign policy is concerned, would be through firm establishment of mutually beneficial diplomatic ties, deepening its engagement with international institutions, and use of its geo-economic positionality for the promotion of peace and economic growth (Keohane & Nye, 1998; Luttwak, 1990).

Through the ideology of neo-liberal democracy that consists of participatory governance and market oriented economies, Pakistan has quicker chances of dignifying its international standing and enhancing economic stability. The theory looked at liquidating conflict via partnership and economic integration that is in line with Pakistan's role of creating exceptional relations on the world with the support of others. It additionally gives prominence to the transparency and repeated engagements on which Pakistan's diplomacy rests that is vital for its country to traverse the complex international and domestic waters (Sørensen, et al., 2022; Keohane & Nye, 1998). This view therefore provides a nuance of how reliance on liberal institutionalism could be a shield for Pakistan that wants to do away with the old mindset or use foreign policy that is centered on economic drives to national security and economic transition in a changing global setting.

A complete Chapter 1, on Theoretical Framework will guide in detail about the lens of this dissertation.

## **10. Research Methodology**

In the field of international relations and political science, researchers typically adopt one of two major methodological perspectives: that is, positivist-behaviorist or post-positivist-interpretive approach (McNabb, 2015). The approach of positivism is known to be the method of quantitative research, whereas post-positivism approach is known to be qualitative research method. This post-positivist research style may also be termed "realist" (or) "hermeneutic" (or) "narrative," according to Oakley (2020). Such methodologies are the means for political scientists to discover and understand the system of politics (Devine et al., 2002). The methodology, research design, the types of data collected and the process of data analysis are described here.

This research employed a qualitative method, specifically the descriptive-interpretive case study approach, to analyze the interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics in the foreign policy of Pakistan through discourse analysis (Foster & Stewart, 2017). The case study method was chosen for its ability to carry on, document processes, provide strong empirical support, enable a thorough examination of cases, and offer a comprehensive understanding of the case studied (Odell, 2001). The primary sources of interviews, official documents, government sources and statements along secondary sources of the text generated were utilized to investigate and elaborate different aspects of the study (Ajayi, 2017). By adopting this methodological framework, the research aimed to provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy and contribute to the broader field of international relations and political science.

The research design is a scheme, which helps to plan a research by setting the methods and techniques that are used to collect data and analysis with the aim to respond to the research question. This constitutes a piece of comprehensive plan that is supposed to guide the whole process of research from the scratch to the end (Gschwend & Schimmelfennig, 2007). While this study used a descriptive-interpretive case study methodology to provide detailed data for description and analysis. This method has the task of offering a recreation of the actions to which policy makers and researchers together with the public may utilize for their interests. This particular research type could also conclude in further studies and possibly the collected information should serve the purpose of testing existing theories (Elliott & Timulak, 2005).

Case study method has several benefits, firstly, the ability to generate or deduce a valid theory (Crowe et al., 2011; Odell, 2001) through more comprehensive and detailed examination of specific instances of events and behavior. Additionally, re-examining previously studied cases can reveal alternative perspectives and challenge established interpretations (McKeown, 1999). Second advantage of case study method is its ability to document processes. The FP analysis is characterized by various processes (majorly geo-political, geo-economic, geo-strategic, etc.). These processes are crucial for understanding the foreign policy of a country (Odell, 2001).

Third advantage of case study method is its ability to provide stronger empirical support for research questions. This method allows for greater confidence in the validity of the cases studied compared to statistical methods for the same cases. While aggregate data can indicate general relationships, such as the relationship among cooperation, states and international institutions, Foreign policy case studies often precede the analysis of

aggregate data on the same theoretical relationship (Tasci et al., 2020). Fourth advantage of case study allows for alternative interpretations of the same events and the generation of new questions and hypotheses by readers (Odell, 2001). Additionally, this detailed reporting provides researchers with materials that can be used to construct quantitative indicators in future studies.

Certainly, here are some merits of the case study research design, specifically the descriptive-interpretive case study design, in the context of this dissertation on "The Interplay of Geo-politics and Geo-economics in Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Imperatives, Constraints, and Potentials." The design of a case study provided an avenue to understand the various connections between geo-politics and geo-economics that characterize Pakistan's foreign policy. This then became the basis for extracting the in depth understanding of the play of political, economic, historical and cultural. etc. contours. (Yin, 2014). It included opportunity to look at this phenomenon from Pakistan's perspectives taking into account its environment, culture, economics and historical back up.

Thus, enabling to understand the imperatives under which the state runs and the constraints it works with (Stake, 1995). The case study format made it possible to analyze multiple subsystem synergetic nature at the same time. This agreed with such dissertation's objectives as determining the efficacy of approaches to evaluation, which imperatives and constraints are involved, as well as the opportunities (Gerring, 2006). The design of a descriptive-interpretive case study type of approach extracted knowledge, which could be immediately deployed to policy making thereby providing a policy framework that could be easily navigated through with geopolitical and geo-economics challenges as the complex factors in Pakistan's foreign policy (Stake, 1995). The study assembled a wide

picture of all the global affairs which importance for Pakistan is determined on both the levels of geo-politics and geo-economics (Yin, 2014).

Data collection is the process of gathering and analyzing information from various sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of a specific topic (Schadewitz & Blevins, 1997). Considering the research criteria, which is based on descriptive methods, both primary and secondary data were collected (Ajayi, 2017). Primary data (Mazhar, 2021) included interviews of relevant stakeholders and government sources. Interviews as:

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>
Ambassador	1
Economist	1
Chartered Accountant	1
Banker	1
Representatives of Think Tanks	2
Mufti (Religious Scholar)	1
Military Officer	1
Bureaucrat	2
Politician	1
Academician	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

This research utilized primary domestic sources, focusing on official government documents and statements from key officials. The primary sources mainly included a range of governmental bodies, notably the Prime Minister's Office, Ministries of Industries and Production, Commerce, Foreign Affairs, the Office of the National Security Advisor, Board of Investment, Economic Affairs Division, Information Technology and Telecommunication, and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Additionally, the research incorporated insights from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), State Bank of Pakistan, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, Ministry of National

Food Security & Research, and the Pakistan Council of Renewable Energy, among other relevant entities.

This study leveraged international primary sources, focusing on contributions from key global organizations. It extensively used information from the World Trade Organization, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Additionally, the research drew upon resources from the Office of the United States Trade Representative and the U.S. Department of Commerce, among other international entities.

Secondary data (Davis-Kean, et al., 2015) is obtained from a variety of sources including books, research papers, academic journals, newspapers, and online portals. It played a crucial role in research by providing a rich foundation for examining and elucidating various aspects of the study. Utilizing secondary data allowed to build on existing knowledge, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation.

Data analysis required evaluating data with specific cases, scenarios and learning their meaning. This is a key thing when conducting research. This technique, the purpose of which is to recognize patterns, relationships or trends in the data, relies on analytical and logical thinking (Bazeley, 2020). In qualitative research, discourse analysis is an often used tool. Different disciplines coin the term "discourse" in different connotations, and each approach generally shares specific methods to its empirical study. Discourse analysis implies that patterns of language, including speech, script, and even electronic media messages, "are organized in rapidity of the patterns that people make use of when they

participate in any kind of discourse in a given field of social life" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Applying linguistic and textual analysis, qualitative discourse analysis in this case enabled to identify the crucial elements in decision makers' outlooks of world politics and foreign policy. Language repetition patterns is crucial to understand the worldview, key notions and strategic interests that influence international affairs (Larsen, 2018). For this reason, the former British PM extensively used phrases such as 'Britain must lead in Europe', 'a special ally of the US', 'a force for good in the world' or 'Britain is an island nation'. Subsequently, scientists are able to examine lexicon of foreign policy debate by determining the usage of these various words or phrases during the debates (Karppi, 2015).

Discourse analysis has been the chief technique used in the process of data analysis within this research (Bazeley, 2020). A strategy of language and narratives used in Pakistan's foreign policy discourse was applied, especially with the interconnection of geopolitics and geo-economics. The study aimed at specifying what is Pakistan's worldview and how it shapes its foreign policy decisions by recognizing repetitive elements (linguistic repetitions, keywords, phrases) in the text, as well as making use of contextual data (Larsen, 2018).

Discourse analysis method has got the potentiality to benefit the current study in several ways (Lynggaard, 2019). First, it makes it possible to spot patterns and trends in the narratives and language employed in debate on foreign policy. This can offer insightful information on the fundamental concepts and presumptions that guide policymaking. Second, a thorough analysis of the discourse around foreign policy is possible thanks to the method's applicability to a variety of data sources, including government sources,

speeches, and media coverage. Third, discourse analysis offers a deeper comprehension of the interaction between geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy by successfully capturing the subtleties and complexity of foreign policy decision-making (Larsen, 2018; Lynggaard, 2019). This examination deepens our awareness of the intricate connections between Pakistan and major powers, neighboring states, and Muslim countries have shaped the state's foreign policy decisions.

## **11. Organization of the Study**

The research work started with the introduction of the study. This part introduced the research topic, objectives, research questions, significance, problem statement and delimitations of the study. This part reviewed the already existing literature on the topic and found out the gap of research and knowledge. Explained briefly the theoretical framework. Qualitative methodological approach, case study research design, data collection, data analysis technique and organization of the research opted in this research are also explained.

**a. Chapter I - Theoretical Framework:** This chapter served as the foundation of the dissertation by elaborating the theoretical framework of neo-liberalism. It set the stage for the subsequent analysis by discussing how this perspective, with its emphasis on cooperation, international institutions, and complex interdependence, offered a unique lens to examine the intended shifts in Pakistan's foreign policy strategies. This chapter was crucial for contextualizing the study within the broader academic discourse of international relations and sets the parameters for the analysis that follows.

**b. Chapter II - The Geopolitical Dimension of Foreign Policy of Pakistan:** This chapter concentrated on the historical dimensions of the country's foreign policy from 1947

to 2008, when it received independence. Through a broad and clear depiction of the international relations of Pakistan in the given period, the chapter gave an answer whether or not it was geopolitics or geo-economics that was the key driver of its foreign policy decisions. This historical analysis remained fundamental for knowing the development of Pakistan's foreign policy and served to show how this policy finally holds up against the comparative post-2008 countries.

**c. Chapter III - The Idea of Geo-economic Reorientation of Foreign Policy of Pakistan:** This chapter discussed the strategic geo-economic response of Pakistan concerning the global economic reordering. It gave a clear picture to the readers on the contours associated with economic diplomacy and emphasized the need for regional integration and diversification of partnerships in order to promote sustainable growth and development. In this chapter, an extended explanation of the essential premises of this changed direction, along with the details of the change plan, and the long-term consequences for the economic future of Pakistan is given.

**d. Chapter IV - The Interplay of Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics in the Foreign Policy of Pakistan:** The chapter focused to provide critical analysis of interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics from 2008 onward. It examined Pakistan's foreign policy towards neighboring countries, Muslim states and major global powers and highlights the changing trends in foreign policy within the context of global and regional dynamics.

**e. Chapter V - Impacts of Intended Transition from Geo-Politics to Geo-Economics on the Foreign Policy of Pakistan:** This chapter examined the impact of changing and ongoing interaction and the emerging shift of policy from geopolitical matters to those of the economy. It dealt with the themes arising from the emergence of

China as a global power, how it reshaped Pakistan's diplomatic, economic and strategic dynamics with the most important actors, along the other impacts on regional and international affairs. The quantitative and tangible data has been utilized for qualitative analysis in this chapter to substantiate the tilt towards geo-economics.

**f. Chapter VI - Imperatives, Constraints, and Potentials: Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics of Pakistan:** This chapter evaluated the inter-relation of geopolitics and geo-economics within the context of Pakistan's national imperatives, constraints, and potentials. It offered an in-depth analysis of how these elements shape Pakistan's foreign policy choices and strategies, considering primarily external factors.

The final part of the dissertation synthesized the **Findings and Conclusion**, offering a comprehensive conclusion that encapsulated the major insights gained from the study. It also presented practical recommendations based on these findings, contributing to the field of international relations and providing invaluable insights for policy and decision makers.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Theoretical Framework

The dissertation's theoretical framework serves as the central tenet and lens through which the subject of the study is seen, understood, analyzed and interpreted. The ideas, principles, theories, and parameters are explained within the scope and focus of the research and it shapes how the findings are interpreted (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework and its Significance

The theoretical foundation for this thesis investigated the complex interplay between geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy post 2008, through the prism of neo-liberalism. The main theoretical topics were geopolitics, geo-economics, neoliberalism and foreign policy. In the particular context of Pakistan, this study adhered to comprehend the interactions between these factors, which is located at a global intersection of political, economic, and strategic interests.

The neo-liberalism theory has been very influential in the field of international study, as it helps to understand the interactions between politics and economics and their general implications on the global economy (Harvey, 2007). The dictum that has been critical to the reordering of the world after the 20th century has been the one, which explicitly cares against intervention, and instead steers the state away from engagement in civil society arena and global institutions. This argument has its roots in the doctrine of free markets, private sector, and liberalization. Geopolitics and geo-economics have been considerably undergone change in their dynamics, with policies of several countries and international organizations simply overhauled (Cohen & DeLong, 2010).

Neo-liberal analysis of Pakistan's foreign policy offered a great lens than the other foreign policy perspectives because it presented an economic approach to which policy-making is a central theme. In the course, to evaluate in what way the country's foreign policy is considered of the interdependence of geopolitics and geo-economics, and if the latter is going to replace the former after the transition.

Neoliberalism has significantly affected Pakistan's foreign policy by emphasizing economic diplomacy and market-driven growth. This shift is evident in Pakistan's efforts to strengthen regional cooperation, negotiate free trade agreements and attract foreign investment. By prioritizing economic interdependence over traditional geopolitical concerns, Pakistan's foreign policy behavior reflects a strategic alignment with neoliberal principles, focusing on integration into the global economy to ensure long-term stability and prosperity.

This theoretical platform in particular helped to gain better understanding that is manifested in clear and complex manner of Pakistani foreign policy. It created a cohesive approach by incorporating geopolitics, geo-economics through neo-liberalism. With this prism in place, a powerful analytical glass helped in deepening our understanding as to how global political and economic transformations affected Pakistan's foreign policy.

The learning about how neo-liberalism affects foreign policy is equipped with knowing the theoretical pillars of the complex interdependence in this case. Besides providing policymakers with new insight into the borders of the policy and the brand new opportunities that influence the direction of foreign policy, the geography of Pakistan in the constantly changing of the international geopolitical and geo-economics landscapes is a source of knowledge for them.

## **1.2 Defining Key Concepts within the Theoretical Framework**

To dissect the intricacies of geopolitics and geo-economics in shaping the foreign policy of Pakistan, it was essential to articulate the underlying concepts within the theoretical framework. This section delved into the definitions, scopes, and significances of geopolitics, geo-economics, and neo-liberalism. By conceptualizing these terms, it aimed to set a solid theoretical foundation for the research, ensuring a precise understanding of these concepts in the context of Pakistan's foreign policy. The application of this theoretical framework has been made in the under debate dissertation.

The phrase "geo-politics" combines the words "geo," which means "earth," and "politics." It relates, more broadly speaking, to how spatial structures affect political behavior and judgment (Flint, 2016). Physical geography (such as terrain, climate, and resources), human geography (such as population distribution, urbanization, and cultural landscape), and geopolitics (such as proximity to other nations, borders, and influential areas) are all examples of geographic factors (Cohen, 2014). Although the concept is broad, it has major implications for the development of foreign policy.

In particular, when it comes to territorial disputes, resource access, power projection, defense, and security, geopolitics plays a critical role in understanding and explaining why and how governments behave as they do on the international stage (Tuathail & Toal, 1996). Geopolitics is significant because it places a strong emphasis on the connection between physical geography and political power. It exemplifies how geography can influence the political interests. Geography often shapes political interests; the strategic location of a country, its natural resources, and its proximity to key regions or trade routes significantly influence its political priorities and foreign policy decisions. In

Pakistan's case, its geography - bordering Afghanistan, China, India, and being a gateway to Central Asia - has historically shaped its geopolitical and economic interests, driving its foreign policy focus on security, trade routes, and regional alliances. According to Dodds, Kuus, and Sharp (2013), a state's geographic position can have an impact on its security concerns, economic potential, and international alliances and conflicts.

The geopolitical significance in relation to Pakistan is widely acknowledged. Pakistan occupies a crucial strategic location that piques the interest of major world powers due to its location at the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. It shares borders with India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China, placing it in the center of major geopolitical merits and demerits (Fair, 2014). Additionally, the country's coastline along the Arabian Sea gives it access to the Middle East's abundant oil reserves and positions it as a key player in the fields of sea power and maritime security. Pakistan's foreign policy has been strongly influenced by this geopolitical significance as well as the domestic political dynamics of the country (Rizvi, 1993). This study used the idea of geopolitics to examine how these geographic factors have influenced Pakistan's foreign policy and how they interact with geo-economics in the age of globalization.

A renowned strategic thinker, Edward Luttwak was the first who used the term "geo-economics" in 1990 to depict the synergy between economic as well as foreign politics, known as geopolitics, which is the utilization of economic resources for geopolitical gains (Luttwak, 1990). In geo-economics, it is the economic structure of a state that give rise to inter-state relations and direct decision making, while geopolitics pays special attention to how geographical environment affects political entities. Geo-economics is an umbrella term that covers a variety of economic facets, including global

financial movements, global trade, supply chain dynamics, resource allocation and more (Blackwill & Harris, 2016).

Additionally, it involves an understanding of how economic arrangements and policies can be utilized as tools to impose control or build a dominating force over other states or vice versa (Wigell, Scholvin, & Aaltola, 2018). The newly arising perception that economic foundations underline a country's strength within the international system in terms of power and influence makes geo-economics stand out as a factor important in this respect. The role of economic variables in world politics today can, alternatively, be assessed at a much higher level than before, alongside the increasing influence of globalization, technology, and interconnectedness (Wigell & Aaltola, 2018).

As Pakistan seeks to explore its geo-economic prospects, there are many prospects. These are the advantages that are a consequence of area's good location, labor potential, natural resources, and as such, the possibility to play a role of a trade and energy corridor. As a case in point, we have the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is embedded in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Wolf, 2020). Since the interesting aspect of it is based on investor to build projects of infrastructure development and might add up to the country's economy, this project is the perfect illustration of geo-economics concept (Yusuf & Akhtar, 2023).

Moreover, a close assessment of the implications on China's agenda for the region, its consequences are also political. Hence, to grasp the world, the volatility and shift in Pakistan foreign policy (Small, 2015); one must understand geo-economics. This research embodied the task of breaking up geo-economics as a process in order to grasp the trends of how economic factors affected Pakistan's foreign policy and relations with other nations.

### **1.3 Understanding the Interplay and Transition from Geo-politics to Geo-economics**

The intricate connection between geographical and economic factors in determining state behavior and foreign policy decisions is referred to as the "interplay between geopolitics and geo-economics." Territorial control, defense, and security were the main priorities of the conventional geopolitics strategy. Nevertheless, the increased economic interconnection and globalization have made geo-economics more prominent (Mead, 2014). The relevance of geopolitics is not lost as a result of this change. Instead, it denotes a shift in statecraft's emphasis towards the use of economic force and financial tools to further geopolitical goals. Examples of geo-economics in action include sanctions, trade disputes, economic corridors and energy politics (Blackwill & Harris, 2016).

The way governments negotiate their position in the international system is significantly impacted by the interaction between geopolitics and geo-economics. In order to best serve overall national interests, countries have to strike a balance between their geopolitical and geo-economics interests. For instance, if a state can achieve large geo-economic gains, it may elect to continue a politically unfavorable relationship (Cohen, 2014).

The fascinating example of this interaction and transition has been seen in Pakistan's foreign policy. Geopolitical factors, such as territorial conflicts with India, strategic partnerships for defense and security, and Pakistan's place in the larger Islamic community have historically heavily influenced Pakistan's foreign policy. Recent events, however, suggested a greater focus on geo-economics as Pakistan attempted to strengthen its economy through programs like the CPEC (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023). Although, this change is not without its complications.

#### **1.4 The Underpinning Theory: Neo-Liberalism**

Due to the fact that the study should clarify and provide necessary statistics when speaking about the nature of geo-politics and geo-economics and their collaborative work, it is necessary to evaluate the interpretative power of the International Relations (IR) theories which are presented comparatively to the mentioned contours. The essential theories and perceptions have succinctly been appraised in the following section, which is classical realism, neorealism and social constructivism. Later we see how, neo-liberalism is opted as the theory that is more preferable as a theoretical base of this present study (Sørensen, et al., 2022).

A classical realism, which is a descendant of the Thucydides and Machiavelli proponents, is an approach, which expresses a pessimistic approach to human nature in that they view it as an inherently selfish and always power-hungry trait of people. Thus, the power shift context as well as the fight for survival on the anarchic world stage is the focal point of this realism (Forde, 1992). The classic realists stress that state's influence always exceeds the interests of an ordinary people and it behaves in accordance with its instinct of survival by striving for power (Sørensen, et al., 2022).

Such theorists maintain that a natural competition inherent in states is often mighty enough to cause conflicts and wars, where absence of morality affects international arena. This standpoint in fact presents the state sovereignty, national interests, and power balance as the main key factors in deciding who is stronger and who is weaker as well as who stands where in the position of the international affairs (Schuett, 2010).

Neorealism, or structural realism, the school that derives from classical realism on the basis that the human nature contains a potential for rapid, and at times, violent

transformation can now concentrate on the structural limitations imposed by the international system, rather than focusing exclusively on human nature (Bessner & Guilhot, 2015). Kenneth Waltz's neo realistic connotation implies that the anarchic structure of the international system (apparently, no central authority) inevitably situates states to build power based on the similarity of international security thinking (Sørensen, et al., 2022).

A key notion of neorealism is the prevalence of power created between the states, which puts specific international structure impact on state behavior instead of on other factors. The neo-realists are of the opinion that the states mainly for their survival selfishly work within the system's framework and that forces them to take a self-reliance mechanism by means of guaranteeing their own security (Waltz, 1979).

Neorealism questions the role of motives like strategic interests, power struggles and geopolitical factors primarily play in determining a state's behavior. Typically, it prioritize military dominance and is robustness, however, with regards to the adversarial states having economic balance. The balance rather contributes to the structural deviation of anarchy not displaying on dealing with the economic stability (Guzzini, 1993). However, the stepping aside from defense and pure defense related ties in favor of economic cooperation has been clearly visible in the foreign policy of the Pakistan (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023).

Moreover, noticeably, the contours of Pakistan foreign policy have discussed of late are mostly connected with the sphere of economics, such as the infrastructure, international trade, Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), energy cooperation and where private entrepreneurs, as well as State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) are seen as key players

(Latief & Lefen, 2019). The neorealism is, therefore, in a sense is partially justified when Pakistan's foreign affairs are analyzed.

Moreover, the social constructivism stresses out the process containing the state's conducts that are influenced by the ideational factors of the behavior such as norms, identities, and beliefs as opposed to materials (Wendt, 1999). International relations, which are shaped by social constructivism, believe that nations' actions are to a large extent taken on the basis of ideational factors, including norms, identities, and thoughts, and the traditional understanding of the world is presented as being different in nature. This theory, which is forwarded by Alexander Wendt, accentuates the significance of commonality of ideas, meaning, and social interaction in precisely defining the international system. Following this line of thought, it says that the states' behavior is not exclusively derived from their narrow or selfish interests; rather it is a manifestation of their understandings as to who they are and what their interests are at any given time (Agius, 2018).

Additionally, social constructivism puts a major accent on the genesis of states identities and their interactive ties with other actors through language, discourse, and the common perceptions of the existing international order (Paris 1990). Social constructivism indeed offers to explain the policy of Pakistan taking into account non-material factors including norms and beliefs and therefore, it is short on material factor, i.e., geopolitics and geo-economics. A country's historical background, the goals and dynamics of diplomatic relationships as well as their economic need are influential factors in the form of which bilateral relationship is constructed (Rahim & Kasi, 2020). Therefore, constructivism could not explain these factors.

Neo-liberalism or institutional liberalism is a theoretical perspective in country's relations that stresses that cooperation among states is possible and it can last over a long period of time and this may lower the odds of conflict and competition between states (Powell, 1994). The concept was denominated by the political scientist Robert Keohane in the 1990s.

Liberal institutionalism is a theory of international relations that emphasizes the role of international institutions and regimes in promoting cooperation and reducing conflict between states. Unlike other theories like realism, liberal institutionalism takes into account internal politics and the impact of democracy and capitalism on international relations. Proponents of this theory argue that democratic systems and capitalist economies promote peace and economic opportunities, and that cooperation can be sustained through repeated interactions, transparency, and monitoring (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Liberal institutionalists, like Robert Keohane, believe that the many govern and not the few in democratic systems and that this leads to peace. The theory also emphasizes the idea that friendly, democratic and capitalist nations will negotiate mutually beneficial trade deals (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985).

The emergence of complex interactions and interdependence among states has drastically altered the landscape of international politics, according to Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. They acknowledged that the various and intricate transnational ties and dependencies between states and societies have grown, while the use of military force and power balancing have become less important but still play a vital role. (Keohane & Nye, 1998). Neo-liberalism aims to achieve the objectives of shifting towards a global economy where the values of minimal regulation predominate by which states collaborate on

economic matters to gain mutual benefit as interdependence and interconnection increases (Sørensen et al., 2022; Keohane & Nye, 1998).

Neo-liberalism serves as an effective lens to analyze Pakistan's relationships with other states, particularly in economic and diplomatic spheres. Many nations adopt neo-liberal principles, emphasizing privatization, market-driven growth, and reforms to enhance economic competitiveness and integrate into regional and global agreements (Sørensen et al., 2022). This approach also extends to international forums and regional collaborations, reflecting a diplomatic focus on global economic interests and collective security (Rauf, 2019). However, the social impacts of liberal policies, such as challenges to welfare systems, income distribution, and domestic industrialization, remain contentious, highlighting the trade-offs between liberalization and social equity (Gromyko, 2020; Macdonald, 2014).

Nations increasingly favor economic collaboration with International Financial Institutions (IFIs), which utilize neo-liberal economic models as both financial channels and geopolitical tools (Chorev & Babb, 2009). Global entities like the IMF, World Bank, and regional development banks significantly influence states by providing loans, financial aid, and technical support (Mansoor et al., 2023). Additionally, civil society, including NGOs, MNCs, and grassroots movements, plays a growing role in shaping global economic policies by promoting human rights, sustainability, and fair trade, influencing government and intergovernmental strategies beyond borders (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The theoretical literature review is illustrated to indicate that the core conventional international relations theories mainly realism and constructivism, are unable to account fully for current international developments and the economic harmonization matters of

Pakistan (Sørensen, et al., 2022). Neo-liberalism appears as the core framework at the basis of this research addressing the issue of the application of a range of different economic tools in modern international relations (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Emphasizing Neo-Liberalism conceptual framework with regards to incorporated into the subject matter of the dissertation, it obtained a theoretical task of considering how the essence of liberal institutionalism is used in order to describe the new shift in the foreign policy of Pakistan towards the geo-economics (Sørensen, et al., 2022; Luttwak, 1990) . It is this theoretical framework provided as a tool for analysis that helps perceive the transformation of Pakistan's foreign policy after 2008. This period characterizes a very important static period where economic motivators and mutual co-operation between states have progressively circumscribed the diplomatic activities.

Neo-liberal democracy, emphasizing participatory governance and market-oriented economies, offers Pakistan an opportunity to enhance its international standing and economic stability. By promoting conflict resolution through partnerships and economic integration, this approach aligns with Pakistan's efforts to build strong global relationships. It underscores transparency and consistent engagement, which are crucial for navigating complex domestic and international challenges (Sørensen et al., 2022; Keohane & Nye, 1998). This perspective highlights how adopting liberal institutionalism can support Pakistan's transition from traditional security-focused policies to economic-driven strategies in a dynamic global environment.

#### **1.4.1 The Roots of Neo-Liberalism**

The neo-liberalism philosophy came into being in post-World War II period as an alternative theory of economic and political ideas in some respects that Keynesian

economics system had failed, which had revealed the advantages of government intervention in the economy (Harvey, 2007). The free-market ideology first got prominence as advocated by the works of Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek (Friedman, 1962; Bowles, Kirman, & Sethi, 2017).

Free market which proves as an ideological form of neoliberalism advocates the value of the free market, entrepreneurship and the low level of government influence on economic components. Neo-liberalism's central idea is that the market is stabilized on its own and thus can lead to growth and development through creation of competition, innovation, and productive resource utilization without any outside help (Friedman, 1962). Neo-liberalism is an extension of classical economic liberalism, emphasizing free markets and limited government intervention. However, the neo-liberal model goes beyond merely functioning as a market player. It underscores the active role of the state in establishing and designing institutional frameworks that facilitate well-functioning markets. This includes the creation of clear competition rules that promote fair competition and market efficiency (Harvey, 2007).

Throughout the intertwining of national and global policies, international relations play a crucial role that is greatly influenced by neoliberalism. Neo-liberalism implies that loose trade and unimpeded transfers of capital undercut state's competitive advantage, hence promote state collaboration, a situation that in most cases may lead to nations reducing the possibilities of conflict and advance cooperation and peace instead (Keohane & Nye, 2011; Friedman, 1992).

Neo-liberalism gave rather a good description of the contributing economic factors into the international affairs of Pakistan. Hence, this helped comprehending the interplay

and transition especially where directionality of policy seemed of more security-oriented nature than afterwards taking into account geo-economics (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023) as well as state's impact in international standing, the partners and its place in the world economy (Esteban, 2016). This study explored the foreign policy of Pakistan from the perspective of neo-liberalism, specifically its dynamics given the requirements of its strategic location and the limitations of its economic policies.

### 1.4.2 Key Principles of Neo-Liberalism

Neo-Liberalism rests on several key principles: the power of cooperation between states in anarchic system, the reality of complex interdependence, the propagation of democratic peace and the efficacy of free market economics (i.e. the preeminence of the free market, advocacy of free trade, private sector expansion, and deregulation).

**Figure 1.1 Neo-Liberalism – Main Features** (Harvey, 2007).



The layout of the concepts above appears to be loosely hierarchical, with the more economic-focused elements at the top and the more political and relational elements at the bottom, suggesting that while economic principles are central to neo-liberalism, its influence extends into the political and social spheres as well (Hussain, et al., 2020).

*Cooperation among States:* Neo-Liberalism emphasizes the capacity of states to achieve and sustain cooperation, leading to a reduction in competition and conflict. While neo-liberalism acknowledges the anarchy inherent in the international system, it fundamentally disagrees with the notion that anarchy inevitably leads to conflict. Neo-liberalists argue that despite the lack of a central authority in the global arena, states can, and indeed do, cooperate to achieve mutual benefits (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Repeated interactions, transparency, and effective monitoring are believed to be keys to sustaining cooperation (Keohane & Martin, 1995). This perspective emphasizes the role of international institutions, norms, and interdependence in fostering cooperation among states.

*Complex Interdependence:* This principle acknowledges that the intricate, transnational ties and dependencies among states and societies have grown significantly. The international political landscape has shifted due to the emergence of multiple channels of action among societies involving interstate, trans-governmental, and transnational relations (Harvey, 2007). There is also an absence of a hierarchy of issues, with changing agendas and linkages between issues. Lastly, the objective of complex interdependence is to reduce the use of military force and coercive power in international relations (Hussain, et al., 2020). Following figure 1.2 further explains complex interdependence:

**Figure 1.2 Complex Interdependence – Main Features** (Keohane & Nye, 1977)



*Democratic Peace:* This principle posits that democratic systems promote peace and economic opportunities. Neo-liberalists, like Robert Keohane, propose that democratic systems operate under the governance of the many, not the few, leading to peaceful outcomes. Furthermore, the theory emphasizes that friendly, democratic, and capitalist nations tend to negotiate mutually beneficial trade deals (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985).

*Role of Institutions and Regimes:* The notion of neo-liberalism extensively relies on the influence of international communities and organizations in the promotion of state changes and the disclosure of cooperation among the countries. Keohane (1984) posits that international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, or World Trade Organization create forums that not only facilitate better understanding across nations,

reduce uncertainty in information circulation and hinder high transaction costs but ultimately promote international cooperation. Also, Institutions and regimes are the main mechanisms in empowering global societies with the execution of international rules and norms, allowing for more coherency and serenity in world order (Hussain, et al., 2020; Harvey, 2007). In addition, they perform two vital tasks; conflict diffusers and peace restorers that are helping states resolve disputes and thus avoiding conflicts. Institutionalism in neo-liberalism is a way to make a refutation of realist thinking, which claims that states are the only important actors that operate in a chaotic world where the anarchy rules (Keohane, 1984).

*Free Market Economics:* Free market rules take a priority under neo-liberalism, the main principle being the market economics as a source of growth and wellbeing. This calls for advocating for free trade and the growth in the private sector on one side together with deregulation on the other to trim down state's economic intrusions (Harvey, 2007). These principles coincide with a view that markets, administered by the price mechanism, are most capable to sort resources and generate wealth (Friedman, 1962).

A free market according to neoliberalism is considered supreme, and it operates on the basis of voluntary exchange where smallest possible role is allotted to the state for the purpose of enhanced economic development and welfare (Keohane & Nye, 2011). It claims that the market, which is driven by the price mechanism, is the most effective instrument to bring prosperity, employment, ensure correct allocations of resources, and growth of the economy (Friedman, 1962). The conviction in market efficiency, however, also carries the principle of self-correction; neo-liberals argue that markets have the ability to rectify themselves while returning to an equilibrium without the necessity of state intervention.

Defending a system of free trade has a great significance in Neo-Liberalism ideology. It says that unrestricted trade between countries brings mutual benefits since each nation retains the ability to concentrate on areas in which it is comparatively good at, contributing to economic efficiency and shared prosperity for all (Bhagwati, 2004). Neo-Liberalism implies freeing trade and lifting tariff barriers to achieve the same scope of an agreement on where no protectionism is conducted (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Under neoliberal economic philosophy a role for the private enterprise in the economy is emphasized with due regard to its ability to boost economic growth. It is stated that the market relations, grounded on the profit drive, can lead to the realization of all the goods and services more effectively than bureaucratic management. Self-sufficiency of state-owned enterprises as well as promotion of the entrepreneurship are usually the measures contributed to liberals (Harvey, 2007).

Conclusively, Neo-Liberalism advocates for liberalizing through the removal of state regulating to minimise the level of state involvement in business activity. This includes the idea that complex regulation can hamper competition, thus making it progressively difficult for newcomers to enter the market and incumbents to stay relevant (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Therefore, deregulation is regarded as the key that unlocks businessman's desired environment that has the capacity to generate dynamism in services sector (Friedman, 1992).

In this light, the Pakistan's foreign policy is seen to be undergoing a series of changes as it shifts from a geopolitical one to a geo-economic one in the frame of neo-liberalism. This study seeked to uncover how the notions of democratic peace, free market economy,

collaboration, and multifaceted thinking govern Pakistan's international policy-making process by employing this framework as a theoretical framework (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The focus on economic and foreign policies in Pakistan followed the neo-liberal orientation. A shift towards neo-liberal kind of order is visible in the efforts of the government to liberalize the trade, encourage the foreign investment, privatize the state-owned firms and de-regulate various sectors (Zaman, 2020). This work investigated whether the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics formed foreign policy in the context of multiplex relations, using a neoliberal lens.

### **1.5 Application of Neo-Liberalism in Geo-politics and Geo-economics**

The neo-liberalism application on the geo-politics and geo-economics led to a deeper perceptive of the behavior of the state and international relations. Through highlighting interdependence, cooperation, and international organizations neo-liberalism framework (Keohane & Nye, 2011) is then extended as a practical approach to understanding dynamics of the rapidly changing world politics and economy. This section is meant to peel the onion of how neoliberalism influenced geopolitics and geo-economics. It also discussed the transformative effects this ideology on state interaction, conflict and cooperation and there implications on Pakistan's foreign policy (Harvey, 2007).

The phenomenon of cooperate and conflict between the geopolitics and neoliberalism are an intrinsic one. Strategic competition and inter-state relations is what traditional geo politics is about but this study try to look at it through neoliberalism's lenses. Two major factors as to why cooperation among states is inevitable are: international institutions provide specific mechanisms and mutual dependence characterizes the modes of state interaction which is why there is no better alternative than

cooperation (Keohane & Nye, 1973). According to neoliberalism, even anarchy of states can be the background for cooperation in the realization of shared political goals like fighting terrorism, addressing climate change or seeking international trade. Achieving this goal is impossible without such institutions/norms that reduce uncertainty, lay-out rules of conduct and resolve arguments; therefore, they are essential for maintaining cooperation among nations. (Keohane, 1984).

Conflicts are yet also brought on by the intersection of neoliberalism and geopolitics, particularly when states place national interests above those of the community. The emphasis on economic liberalization, deregulation, and free trade under neo-liberalism can put pressure on domestic industries and have an impact on political power dynamics, which can result in disputes (Stiglitz, 2012). In addition, the criticism of neo-liberalism as cultural imperialism may spark resistance and conflicts in geopolitical situations, particularly in areas where Western ideologies are perceived as a threat to local cultural identities (Said, 1993). These connections and conflicts between neoliberalism and geopolitics are carefully examined in the context of Pakistan's foreign policy. Neo-liberal ideals may lead Pakistan to collaboration and prosperity, but they may also bring up tensions and difficulties that Pakistan must carefully handle.

Through the approach which showed that the countries are more linked to each other and resulted in the establishment of the free trade system and the economic cooperation framework, the Neo-Liberal philosophy have a great influence on the concepts of geo-economics (Friedman, 2005). This view says that going down the road of reducing economic barriers and introducing the system of deregulation and privatization would boost up production and efficiency and at last increase a country's wealth and standard of

living too (Harvey, 2007). With neo-liberalism economic outlook turns into a place for cooperation and integration where it used to be a war amongst countries. Through enforcement of norms, openness promotion, and management of financial crises, organizations with such structures as WTO and IMF use neo-liberal framework to create economic interdependence and stability (Krugman, 1999).

Similarly, the endorsement of free trade agreements and regional economic blocs under the neoliberal policy escalates the economic integration. As countries become more likely to help one another, trade relations is likely to increase across international boundaries, thereby, precipitating in reduced chances of conflicts (Oneal & Russett, 1999). Even though neoliberalism's free market economy and liberalization seem to be a panacea for incomes disparities within and between states, they might rather widen income gaps both on state and international level. On the contrary, market free reign will result into social anarchy and unstable economy with more wealth concentration of the cheapest labour (Stiglitz, 2012).

The meet-up of Geo-economics and Neo-liberalism working in the Pakistan background makes the problem rather difficult. In other words, stability and security found in liberal capitalism are likely to attract capital from outside economy, boost local economy and strengthen international relations (Keohane & Nye, 2011; Luttwak, 1990). What should be emphasized on the one half is tackling the implication of economic inequality and the social unrest brought about by this.

The integration and transition from geopolitics to geoeconomics, preferably with focus on jointly and mutually beneficial means instead of contention and confrontation, reaffirms the basic critical neo-liberal elements (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023; Harvey, 2007).

In contrast, there is the 'complex interdependence' view posited by Keohane and Nye (1984), which may furnish us with some of the most valuable lessons as we seek to grasp the ever-evolving dynamics of an increasingly interconnected international system.

Kearns stated in his 2009 work that geopolitics, for the most part, has traditionally had to do with the inclusion of power between nation-states, and this inclusion is sometimes done for military purposes (Kearns, 2009). However, with the ever increasing networking of the world, the economic relations and cooperative agreements starts to play a larger role in how world order will be. This new geo-economics paradigm, which is an active concentration on the allocation and distribution of economic power and resources globally, can be considered as a consequence of the way the ideas of neoliberalism now inform international lawmaking (Harvey, 2007; Luttwak, 1990).

According to the neo-liberalism, the grounds for more liberal democracy and free-market capitalism commits to peace and economic well-being. The challenge is, however, the different democracy, capitalist states like China and the constant economic inequality remaining on the globe, the citizens have set aside the end of history thesis by Fukuyama (1989) that the liberal democracy is the best form of government. In spite of these problems, the fundamental elements of neo-liberalism that emphasize the work of international institutions in shaping a hierarchical world order based on set rules retain their weight to date (Ikenberry, 2011).

Similarly, the idea of “complex interdependence,” one of the key features of neo-liberal theory, used as a lens that analyzes how geopolitics and geo-economics interact. Complex interdependence theory claims that in a world with ties, states have different ways

to come into communication and can use economic ties they have to settle problems, if there are any occurring (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

For instance, policy shift from geopolitics to geo-economics in the case of Pakistan points to joining the economic diplomacy and regionalization (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023). The balance between “geopolitics” and the relatively new concepts is stated by the continued role of geo-economics. Finally, it is the focus of this research to specify what consequences those changes in foreign policies led to with the case of Pakistan in terms of neo-liberalism framework.

### **1.6 Neo-Liberalism and Foreign Policy**

In this section, the study went further to create a promising theoretical link and result between the two fields of neoliberalism and foreign policy (Curtis, 2012; Keohane & Nye, 2011), which presented a detailed exploration of the complex link between them. The idea of Neo-Liberalism as a guiding theory in international affairs is critical because it determines the policy directions and strategic insights of countries by having very significant repercussions on the diplomatic, economic, and social-political environments (Harvey, 2007).

Adopting these basic ideologies such as collective action, complex interaction and open-spectrum, economics lead to the international relations and the global politics being affected by Neo-Liberalism and its foreign policies. It is this part that undertakes a detailed analysis of the application of Neo-Liberal theory in the realm of foreign policy, hereby addressing the areas where they show prospects of change while also considering the alternative points raised against them (Curtis, 2012; Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Neoliberal ideas are the primary reason for the alarming difference that the states have concerning their foreign policy formulation today. Cooption of international institutions in order to build bridges among states and even better outcomes that will be beneficial to all participants is another of the most important fundamental theories of neo-liberalism (Keohane, 1984). The specialized foreign policy of many states - nowadays - can be signified by the shift and transformation from the neo-liberalist interpretation to the emphasis on cooperation and integration with other nations; this shift is accompanied with the reduction of militaristic and power-driven policies and the implementation of diplomacy, dialogue, and economic cooperation. Defined as neo-liberalism by Moravcsik (1997), the pillar values are said to be democracy, interdependence, and transnationalism under which free commerce, peaceful settlement of conflict, and human rights are given priority levels in international policy.

These underpinnings have helped a lot of countries to acquire foreign policy goals; and as a result, they show a real willingness to maintain global peace and stability by means of proper international institutions. To put it simply, Europe Union is one of the best illustrations of neo-liberal institutionalism, and has brought a peaceful coexistence and after the horrible history of the world, the economic growth of its member states is highly prevalent (Rosamond, 2000). The idea that liberty trade and open markets serve the purpose of the greatest achievement of economic wealth and prosperity is also a feature of the new liberalism. Foreign economic activities that include reducing trade barriers, attracting foreign investment, and integrating themselves into the global market have been the basis of several states' handling of fiscal matters due to this view (Harvey, 2007).

The global economic structure and policies that are as implemented by governments or international institutions no matter how huge multinational companies have also been challenged by this phenomenon so far. The geopolitics and foreign policies have been redefined with enhanced communication, mutual trust, and the building of positive relations between the states; a change brought about by the concept of cooperation which is one of the major tenets of the neo-liberalism theory (Moravcsik, 1997).

These alterations in the relationship have contributed immensely by curtailing disagreements, placate geopolitics which usually promote a positive attitude towards the economic development. States linked positive outcomes of joint efforts sharing common problems and opportunities arising from that collaboration when they cooperate and realize the reciprocal benefits that come from pooled efforts (Keohane & Nye, 2011). This orchestration of peace and friendship definitely alters the balance of powers and has a huge influence on the policy of foreign countries.

Geoeconomics is currently becoming a package that is being used to develop foreign policies which are largely driven by the profound entanglement described by neo-liberalism as a driving force of modern world. Keohane and Nye (2011) saw it as a state's complete acknowledgement of the existence of its global interconnection and entwinement with other states. This theory now goes beyond the old ways of making foreign policy decisions, on a military bases or strategic level, by including economic interdependence (Harvey, 2007; Luttwak, 1990). So, there has been a transformation in the orientation of foreign politics whereby national interests are dictated by economic incentives instead of geopolitics as a result of countries' foreign policies which increasingly give emphasis to geo-economics.

International institutions are viewed as the essence of preserving balance and reform in the international scenario by acting as the forum for dialogue, conflict, and cooperation among countries (Keohane, 1984), and their preponderance has determined dramatically the relationship among geopolitics and geo-economics in foreign policy. Indeed, one of the most essential aspects of building an international system is the introduction of clear and strictly necessary rules, as they help foster cooperation and limit possible conflicts (Harvey, 2007). If organizations like the United Nations, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are the ones that do it, among many others.

Likewise, they enable the structuring of international relations by making states to coordinate their policies and fight global problems. Governments set the agenda, states establish the rules, international organizations facilitate collaboration and mitigation. By doing this, these groups have impacted the globalization processes of economies which quickly shifted to and the emerged regional cooperation and interdependence (Ikenberry, 2011). Internationally oriented institutions have been instrumental in the economic aspect of diplomacy by staging conversation places where governments contribute to the strengthening of the economic relationships (Gromyko, 2020).

### **1.7 Framework for the Geopolitics and Geo-economics in Pakistan's Foreign Policy**

This section developed on neo-liberalism theoretical framework explaining intersection of its main two concepts and finally introduces geo politics and geo economics in context of Pakistan's foreign policy. The study explained the core values of neo-liberalism in the context of the diplomatic and economic engagement of Pakistan across the world (Harvey, 2007). This part dealt with a detailed explanation of philosophical

foundations behind Pakistan's foreign policy patterns. It is a major source of information about imperatives, constraints and potentials within the context of our global environment.

Neo-liberalism has further strengthened Pakistan's growth of foreign policy. The neo-liberalist influence is visible in Pakistan's economy and politics specially in its relations with the world particularly with the advanced economies such as the United States, China and the European Union (Sargana & Sargana, 2020). Pakistan has taken an institutionalized approach to international laws as a part of its geopolitics and geo-economics to match with the linear concepts.

The members of the globalized international organizations like UN, World Bank, and IMF have provided Pakistan with a platform on which it communicates with the outer world, resolves conflicts and gets the support in its security-related and welfare issues (Hussain, 2020). This denotes that neoliberalism has been the integral element of Pakistan's foreign policy, and depicts how state understands the benefits of international organizations to accomplish global peace and stability.

As a result of the neo-liberal approach, international trade has expanded, and awareness of economic diplomacy has grown. Consequently, Pakistan has placed greater emphasis on applied economic diplomacy, utilizing trade and investment opportunities to support its foreign policy objectives (Rana & Chaterjee, 2011). Despite facing significant challenges from domestic issues and geopolitical tensions, Pakistan has made substantial efforts to integrate economically into the global community. This integration is seen as a crucial step in improving the country's socio-economic conditions, driven by policies and ideas aligned with neo-liberal ideology (Pande, 2011).

In a nutshell, attitudes to the institutions as well as economic diplomacy and integration into larger global world order shaped the way policy of Pakistan changed under the influence of neo-liberalism. This tells us about the comprehensive understanding of the impact of geopolitics and geoeconomics on shaping Pakistan's foreign policy (Harvey, 2007; Luttwak, 1990). The impact of geopolitics and geoeconomics on the formulation of our foreign policy can be explained through this theoretical approach.

Neoliberal theory can be used to analyze the intersection of geopolitics and geoeconomics in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy. According to Keohane and Nye (1973), in an increasingly complex world, states are influenced by both military and economic interdependencies, which drive broader foreign policy goals. In Pakistan, geopolitics and geo-economics have been highly interconnected in its foreign policy formulation. Pakistan's stance in international relations has been shaped by its geopolitical context, particularly its relationships with neighboring countries like India and Afghanistan (Paul, 2018). However, in recent years, geo-economics has gained increasing prominence and is gradually becoming the dominant force in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy (Wolf, 2020).

Neo-liberalism has accompanied with the growing of diplomatic ties in economy and Pakistan in the performance of this job with other countries democratically. Although the BRI main project was the CPEC which is an example of this shift of the geopolitics related strategy to the geo-economics. Via investments on infrastructure, energy and other fields, the project should be able to contribute to the development of Pakistan and its economy as predicted (Wolf, 2021). The aspect that such assimilation has occurred in these countries and the inference that neoliberal principles have guided Pakistan's foreign policy are vividly portrayed. In the context of neoliberal thinking, e.g. economic growth as a major

conception, Pakistan is also depicted as an indicator of enhancing trade ties with the many partner countries. One of the implications of this new trend is that the recent economic attempts by Pakistan towards countries such as Malaysia and Turkey are manifold in nature. Thus, the shift in Pakistan's foreign policy towards geo-economics is clear (Akram et al., 2021).

Neo-liberalism, a concept offered in Pakistan's international policy, is, however, a matter of scrutiny since there are thorny issues. Introduction of a strict geo-economic engagement however is partly limited and hampered by the region's geopolitical realities which are dominated by conflicts and oppositions put forward by the neighboring countries. India-Pakistan rivalries and Afghanistan situation have often undermined Pakistani ability to fully engage in any regional economic arrangement (Ganguly, 2020).

Additionally, the neo-liberal approach provided a valuable wireframe regarding how geopolitics and geoeconomics combined in Pakistan's diplomatic stance. Let aside progress that the partner country makes on building the strategy around a more geoeconomic component, geopolitical factors in general still determine a lot (Csurgai, 2017). Maintaining responsibility towards national interests is unbearably hard when movements of these two peaks should be followed in a correct way.

The intricacies of the inter-linkages between freedom of movement of goods, services, capital, and sustainability of peace are imparted through the theoretical assessment of the development and shift from geopolitics to geo-economics. The aspects of economic interdependence and collaboration could be better explored by applying new approaches of neoliberalism in the country's foreign relations (Harvey, 2007). From the viewpoint of neo-liberalism, an outstanding moment is brought about by the transition from

geopolitics to geo-economics which is seen as highly significant for both economic growth and national prosperity (Vega, 2021).

Disorders that geo-politics have the past, ordinarily, a genuine impact about Pakistan's foreign policy, especially on its strained relationship with its neighbor India and the strategic consequences of sharing a border with Afghanistan that is torn (Sattar, 2020). Much of Pakistani foreign policy has been under the influence of these geopolitical factors for example its alliance during the cold war with the United States and after 9/11, USA- led campaign against terrorism in which Pakistan is an ally (Jalal, 2014).

However, Pakistan's foreign policy has gradually shifted in recent years to reflect neo-liberal notions of economic interdependence and collaboration, with a stronger geo-economic focus. Initiatives like the CPEC, CAREC, QTTA, QCG are anticipated to boost Pakistan's position as a major participant in regional economic networks, serve as a good example of this shift (Small, 2015). As evidenced by Pakistan's greater involvement with international and regional economic organizations like the WTO, SCO and the SAARC, neo-liberalism also emphasizes the importance of international institutions in promoting collaboration. This signifies a shift in its foreign policy towards one that is more collaborative and dependent on others (Rauf, 2019).

There are difficulties in making the switch from a geopolitically motivated to a geo-economically motivated foreign policy. Pakistan is still battling security problems that could jeopardize its geo-economics ambitions. Geopolitics and geo-economics are not mutually exclusive but rather linked facets of foreign policy, as evidenced by the necessity for the nation to strike a balance between its economic interests and its traditional security concerns (Paul, 2018). Neo-liberals might view Pakistan's foreign policy change towards

a more geo-economic focus as an opportunity for greater cooperation, economic progress, and wealth. To guarantee that the advantages of this change are fully realized, there are some hurdles to be passed.

### **1.8 National Imperatives, Constraints, and Potentials through the Neo-Liberal Lens**

In this section, the study continued with an intense assumption of explaining Pakistan's national imperatives as well as constraints and opportunities within the neo-liberalism's parameters. Bringing light on economic cooperation, regional integration, and the ways in which the private sector are the focus of this quest which is about putting forward a picture of Pakistan's economic and foreign policy (Prime Minister Office. 2021). Similarly, it deals with the geopolitical aspects that it confronts, targeting to uncover the threads that knot together to form a harmonic design of factors affecting Pakistan's direct line of life as a state (Ibid). This in essence employs neo-liberalism as a stepping stone to probe into the policy options and behavior of Pakistan.

Appraising the non liberal space which assists Pakistan's national imperatives within the neo liberal area provides an in-depth analysis of the states top foreign policy concerns which are based among the country's intentions to participate at economic cooperation, interdependence, and improvement of its position in regional and global economic networks (Khan 2019).

National imperatives alongside neoliberalism's influence for Pakistan in the case of the economy are economic growth and well-being. The peaceful act of Pakistan somehow draws it towards the advancement of the economy rather than the geopolitics after the era of geopolitics comes to a demise and instead a new stage of geo-economics takes over the world. That is what shows this body through belonging to the region and economy

agreements and initiatives that are sources of plenty of economic ties and developments on the scale of countries (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023).

In fact, a big part of the Neo-Liberal paradigm lies in enhancing the contribution of the private sector to economic growth. This requirement can clearly be characterized by the fact that the government in this country has started its efforts of availing the services of the private sector, the one which is the engine of economic growth and the crucial source of foreign investment. Whereas, it also undertakes the structural reforms for attracting the FDIs and this is supported by the action taken to ease the conduct of commerce (Rehman et al, 2020).

The next major objective of Pakistan lies in the domain of inter-regional cooperation by capitalizing on the Neo-Liberal framework. International economic interconnection of states, which has become a daily routine, becomes more and more integral to regional economic cooperation and integration. Being in located in the geographical proximity of other countries, Pakistan's potential to be the trade gateway for the region. This is evidenced through its engagement in SAARC, ECO and SCO – among other regional economic organizations – an indicator of the latter's extensive preference for regional cooperation (Rauf, 2019).

However, we should try to understand that national imperatives are influenced by situation in Pakistan in a considerable extent. The intricate regional security order, in which relations with India and at Afghanistan are a priority, determine the nature and objectives of state. These geopolitical issues are still there and in fact very crucial for the country to define its national vision and strategy even as it tries to achieve the goals of an economic interdependence and cooperation (Haqqani, 2013).

Being aware of what national interests mean to the policy craftsmanship of Pakistan from the Neo-Liberal perspective adds depth to an understanding of the goals and methods the country follows in the field of foreign policy (Harvey, 2007). It facilitates the development of conceptual framework of how the country has been coping with the issues of economic growth and regional integration that determined an established path in the history of the country.

The field of Neo-Liberalism divinity, many restrictions may exist in a nation's foreign policy and economy. Such a country like Pakistan with its particularity of geo-political site and historical experience is not an exception. The Neo-Liberal emphasis on free markets and trade liberalization assumes that economies are at a similar level of development, which is not always the case. For Pakistan, its underdeveloped industries and agriculture may struggle to compete in a completely free market. Such a scenario may also exacerbate income inequalities, a criticism often directed at Neo-Liberalism (Brown, 2016). The institution of strong, efficient economic institutions are of vital importance to neoliberal theory, in that these institutions put forward the principles of free market economy and democratic governance (Rodrik, 2008).

Nevertheless, corruption, informal economy and institutional inefficiency are among those factors that limit Pakistan's abject acceptance of the Neo-Liberalist tenets (Uroos et al, 2021). While the shift towards Neo-Liberal policies results in social and cultural changes, some societal groups may find the imposed changes in their ways of life as a reason for resistance (Almeida & Martín, 2022).

In Pakistan, along with the transition, the difficulties are often created by the traditions social structures which are collapse with the religious conservatism and as well

as with the resultant resistance to change. The Neo-Liberal view enables us to comprehend these constraints and favor us with the means to advance tactic to manage the hurdles. According to Neo-Liberalist thinking, a vast field of opportunities might be readily visible to Pakistan (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023). This covers economic gains by utilizing strengths of location and international cooperation attendance as well as institutional strengthening.

Free trade and open markets as a cornerstone of Neo-Liberalism is beneficial for Pakistan, rather the country can integrate in global economy easily once the principle has been set. The ability to sell products to much bigger markets will greatly contribute to the expansion of Pakistani export-oriented sectors which in turn will strengthen the US economy (Sachs et. al., 1995). A regional economic activity is the largest factor of this opportunity and brings a lot of investments into the world's markets (Wolf, 2020). The Neo-Liberal perspective has a positive stand towards international cooperation on one hand but, on the other hand, it also gives the states the benefit of cooperation.

As a participant in various international regimes and a member of organizations like the UN, WTO, SCO and SAARC, Pakistan can utilize these platforms to forge alliances, resolve conflicts, and promote its economic interests (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985). Neo-Liberalism emphasizes strong institutions as vital components of economic development. Therefore, opportunities lie in governance reforms and institutional capacity building, which can lead to improved public services, corruption reduction, more formal economy and a better investment climate, thus fostering economic growth (Rodrik, 2008).

The Neo-Liberal focus on human capital development offers opportunities for Pakistan to invest in education, healthcare, and skills development. These investments can lead to a more productive workforce, thus driving economic growth and social

development (Schultz, 1993). Identifying these opportunities within the Neo-Liberal framework set the stage for a strategic approach to overcoming the constraints discussed in the previous section. The subsequent parts of this dissertation elucidates these potentials further in light of the interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy.

## **1.9 Synthesis**

In this sum up section, study reflects upon the insights and understandings gained through the analytical journey of studying the complex interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy through the lens of Neo-Liberalism. The cumulative reflection is based on the theoretical review and usage with view of to the comprehensive analysis, the key notes and results, what are the international relations theory implications for Pakistan's future. The scope of the review here is limited as this part only condenses the central arguments and thoughts. This attempt is, however, a comprehensive write-up which brings together the true value of theories and models when interpreting the complicated global events.

It is important to grasp the way geopolitics and geoeconomics affected Pakistan's foreign policy that moving forward. So, it is needed that the study looks at the main idea of both geopolitics and geo-economics as well as understand the basic definition of neoliberalism thoroughly. Such study has incidentally revealed the significance and urgency of developing a theory of the underlying social and economical patterns which form the basis for general international affairs and the designing of foreign policy (King et al., 2021).

The Neo-Liberal approach has provided the most relevant lens for our research because of its central essence concerning partnership, entangled structures, democratic peace, free market, complex interdependence and institutions. It has fuelled the debate among theorists on the role of the international system anarchy, there is also the discourse on the factors such as geo-politics and geo-economics and its impact on the Foreign Policy and lastly on the role of institutions and regimes in promoting global cooperation (Powell 1994; Keohane & Martin 1995; Keohane & Nye, 1998)

It has been established that the neo-liberalism's core principles impact on the strategy of states' foreign policy where the importance of a closer cooperation and integration as an instrument of global economic and financial system establishment is recognizable and signals transformation from geopolitics to geo-economics followed by the global relations. Projecting the theory's stature in Pakistan's international policy design reveals its significance in determining the state's course of action at a geopolitical and geo-economic level (Sachs & Warner 1995).

The significance of international relations and geography in the making of the Pakistan's foreign policy agenda became very evident when the study looked at its national imperatives, constraints and potentials through the lens of a neo-liberal philosophy. The areas of priority that have emerged after utilizing Neo-Liberal ideas for introducing reforms in handling against the constraints and availing opportunities (Wolf 2020; Rodrik 2008; Shultz, 1993).

The theoretical framework based on neo-liberalism has largely been very effectual in availing an in-depth knowledge of the complicated interplay between geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan Foreign policy. This second part of the section discusses the

implications and possible futures as a result of the study being mentioned earlier, with particular attention to Pakistan as well as international relations theory in general.

As the viewpoint of this forthcoming study is Neo-liberalism and its core values that are interconnectedness, complex interdependency, democratic peace, international institutions, and lastly, the free market economy, form the basis it becomes obvious. Not only does it guide our thinking processes, but it also is the compass that gives us a direction about the geopolitical and geo-economic factors impacting Pakistan's foreign policy.

Neo-liberal theory sees international relations in terms of complex interdependence possibilities. They can end up in collaboration and mutual undertakings, which will mean the both sides of the bargain will benefit. This analysis is very important towards the question of why is Pakistan, a very active player in the world community, deals responsibly with complicated situations like geopolitics and geo-economics so as to promote cooperation, collaboration and mutual understanding among different countries.

On the other side, the interaction of two concepts: Geo-politics and Geo-economics has emerged thanks to the ideas of democratic peace and free market capitalism. This study thus attempts to decipher how the change in power equation affects Pakistan's foreign policy which is centered on neoliberalism and hence may pose the possibility of being more amiably, trade-motivated relations.

The emphasis of the chapter also applies to Pakistan's interaction with the states, international organization and regimes, which is one of the key themes discussed in neoliberal framework because the study argued the role of international organizations and institutions is important in the preventions of conflict and in fostering cooperation (Martin,

Simmons, 1998). If this will be done, it gives a hint on the effect these relationships have on the government and how this is considered in foreign policy formulation stage.

Briefly, the ideology of the neo-liberalism has been correctly guiding our understanding of the geopolitics, geo-economics and foreign transactions. It plays a supportive role in shape of a guiding compass to us which describes the depth of Perception towards Pakistan's foreign policy within the inter- connected globe as a backdrop. As a perspective for looking into how geopolitics and geo-economics interact and shape Pakistan's foreign policy, neoliberalism theory is undeniably useful.

This thorough theoretical framework explores the essence of the research topic in the chapter's summary, particularly via the prism of neo-liberalism. It offers a substantial framework for studying and comprehending how geopolitics and geo-economics interact in Pakistan's foreign policy. The interplay and effects of the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics, as well as the national imperatives, constraints, and potentials, all are examined through this lens. This chapter provided a solid theoretical foundation that is required for the ensuing empirical study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **The Geopolitical Dimension of Foreign Policy of Pakistan**

Geopolitics – the sphere of international relations which is giving the rightful place to the geographical factors, power relationships and strategic interests in formulation of the foreign policy – is the most dynamic and complex field of foreign policymaking of a state (Cohen, 2014).

The term geopolitics holds an inevitable meaning in relation to diplomacy of Pakistan, its partnership with the regional partners, and alignments at global platforms. The term of geopolitics, as Kaplan (2013) puts it, is the comprehension that geographical characteristics play a vital role in a country's political and strategic actions in the international arena.

#### **2.1 Introduction to Geopolitics in Pakistan's Foreign Policy**

The foreign policy of Pakistan from its inception to 2008 underwent on multidimensional transformation and driven by a wide range of internal as well as external forces (Sattar, 2020). The country navigated at the diplomatic quagmire of complex alliances and security concerns during the Cold War era while strengthening relationships with the U.S., and being active in the Muslim world (Haqqani, 2010). Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan's foreign policy objectives (MoFA, n.d) have been:

- a. Projecting Pakistan as a forward-looking, progressive, moderate, and democratic Islamic state on the global stage.

- b. Establishing and nurturing amicable relationships with nations worldwide, with a particular emphasis on fostering ties with major powers and neighboring countries.
- c. Protecting national security and advancing strategic interests, especially in relation to the Kashmir issue.
- d. Strengthening economic and trade partnerships with the international community to boost national prosperity.
- e. Safeguarding the rights and welfare of Pakistani communities living abroad.
- f. Maximizing the use of national resources to promote regional and international collaboration for mutual development.

Initially, the country compromised its non-aligned notions to reposition itself in the power struggle of the superpowers (Sattar, 2020). This affected the country's regional stance regarding the Indo-Pak relations and the soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These events greatly determined the course of the Pakistani foreign policy players, at times being active regional players, and strategic friends in the global power dynamics (Amin, 2021).

From the geopolitical aspect, the manner in which Pakistan is accosted and configured for relations has been paramount not only in terms of its relationships with neighbors but also its global counterparts in particular (Small, 2015). The location situated among South Asia, The Middle East, and Central Asia made it a key node in regional politics. This positioning influenced its engagements with neighboring countries like India, Afghanistan, and Iran. Furthermore, the country's strategic partnerships with the United States and China were significantly molded by geopolitical considerations, emphasizing security imperatives and regional power dynamics. Geopolitics, therefore, emerged as a

critical factor in Pakistan's foreign policy decision-making processes, guiding its alliances, strategic alignments, and regional engagements since its independence (Gill, 2019; Cohen, 2004).

The partition of British India in 1947 led to the emergence of Pakistan as a separate nation, marking a crucial moment in its geopolitical history. This partition, accompanied by communal violence and displacement, set the initial tone for Pakistan's foreign relations. The newly formed nation faced immediate challenges in establishing its identity and asserting its foreign policy objectives (Talbot, 2009).

The division of British India also resulted in strained relations with India, leading to enduring conflicts, particularly over the Kashmir region. The unresolved territorial dispute significantly influenced Pakistan's foreign policy, shaping its regional alignments and strategic choices (Ganguly, 2002). In its formative years, Pakistan adopted a foreign policy framework focused on forging alliances for security and stability. Joining SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) was emblematic of Pakistan's efforts to ensure its security against perceived Indian threats (Burki, 2018).

The security concerns stemming from the Indo-Pak conflicts and the regional power dynamics drove Pakistan to seek military and economic assistance, primarily from the United States. These alliances significantly influenced Pakistan's geopolitical positioning and foreign policy choices during the early years of its independence (Choudhury, 1974). The Cold War era played a pivotal role in shaping Pakistan's geopolitical positioning. Pakistan's alignment with the United States as a strategic ally against the Soviet Union contributed to a significant shift in its foreign policy orientation. The country became a

crucial player in the regional dynamics, particularly during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (Rashid, 2008).

However, these alliances and engagements during the Cold War also had enduring repercussions on Pakistan's internal stability and regional dynamics (Jones, 2003). Then, after Cold War Era, the alliance on counter terrorism with the USA and NATO gripped another dimension of geo-political nature in context of Pakistan.

This chapter moreover, presented a brief historical analysis of Pakistan's foreign relations with major countries (the USA, Russia, and China), neighboring countries (India, Afghanistan and Iran), and Muslim countries (KSA, Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, Qatar, UAE, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Gulf Muslim Countries, Central Asian Republics, African Muslim countries and Organization of Islamic Cooperation), concisely discussing foreign policy eras from its establishment in 1947 to 2008.

## **2.2 Strategic Alliances and Engagements with Major Powers**

During the period from 1947 to 2008, Pakistan's foreign policy was significantly shaped by strategic alliances and engagements with major global powers, particularly the United States, Russia, and China. These alliances pivoted on geopolitical interests, regional dynamics, and shifting global paradigms (Chapman, 2009; Choudhury, 1974).

### **2.2.1 The Cold War Politics and Pakistan**

The foreign policy of the Pakistan during the Cold war period in particular was to a very great extent influenced by the accounts and arranged engagements with significant actors, such as the USA, Russia and China (Sattar, 2020). Through this, there have been times of friendliness and other times of tension, which show the changing nature of

international politics and Pakistan's efforts to secure its national interests in the midst of a complex global setting (Amin, 2021).

Through several stages, relationship with the United States passed by the alliances, collaborations, and conflicts. Initially, utility of USA alignment was acts of security by India and communism that initiated the Cold War era common threat (Chandio & Khuhro, 2019). This, then, meant that Pakistan joined American led defense organizations such as SEATO and CENTO in the 1950s, hence, showing itself to be a key ally in thwarting communism (Sattar, 2020).

However, this alliance faced challenges due to regional conflicts, particularly the India-Pakistan wars, which strained relations. Instances like the imposition of arms embargoes during conflicts weakened the partnership (Raghavan, 2016). Tensions escalated further due to Pakistan's pursuit of a nuclear program, leading to sanctions and a cooling of ties in the 1990s (Markey, 2008). The post-9/11 era reshaped the relationship, marking a pivotal shift as Pakistan became a key ally in the US-led War on Terror. Pakistan offered crucial support, enabling military operations and intelligence cooperation, leading to the lifting of sanctions and increased financial and military aid (Fair, 2008).

Pakistan's relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War was characterized by ideological divergences, regional conflicts, and intermittent cooperation. The two nations found themselves on opposing sides of the Cold War divide, with Pakistan aligning more closely with the US and Russia supporting India (Hussain, 2005). Conflicts like the India-Pakistan wars further strained relations, although there were instances of collaboration, such as Soviet contributions to Pakistan's infrastructure and joint concerns under the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) framework (Chapman, 2009).

The Pakistan-China relationship, rooted in shared geopolitical interests and mutual concerns regarding India, steadily evolved into a strategic alliance. Initially limited due to Pakistan's allegiance to the US, diplomatic ties were established in the early 1950s (Garver, 2011). The 1962 Sino-Indian War and Pakistan's conflicts with India significantly strengthened the Pakistan-China partnership. China offered substantial economic and military support, enhancing ties, and aiding in various infrastructural projects. The relationship further solidified during the Soviet-Afghan War, with joint efforts against Soviet expansion in the region (Hussain, et al., 2020).

Pakistan's foreign policy during the Cold War era saw a complex interplay of strategic alliances and engagements with major powers, each relationship influenced by geopolitical concerns, regional conflicts, and the pursuit of national interests.

### **2.2.2 Post-Cold War Dynamics**

Following the Cold War, Pakistan's foreign policy with the United States witnessed shifts and complexities. While the alliance persisted, new challenges and biases emerged. The relationship heavily emphasized counter-terrorism cooperation, particularly after the 9/11 attacks. However, suspicions and divergent priorities occasionally strained the partnership (Haqqani, 2010). Pakistan's involvement in combating extremist groups within its borders raised doubts and led to occasional tensions with the US, impacting the trust between the two nations. The US's focus on human rights issues and nuclear proliferation further strained ties (Joshi, 2019).

In the post-Cold War era, Pakistan reevaluated its relationship with Russia. Efforts were made to foster collaboration, especially in trade and investment. However, concerns lingered over Pakistan's nuclear capabilities and regional instability, hindering complete

normalization (Amin, 2021). While attempts were made to revitalize ties, biases from the past, including historical conflicts and geopolitical rivalries, posed obstacles to the development of a comprehensive partnership between Pakistan and Russia in the post-Cold War era (Chapman, 2009).

Pakistan-China relations remained robust post-Cold War, expanding into various domains. Both countries continued to bolster economic, military, and strategic cooperation. Shared interests in regional stability and countering India's influence continued to be pivotal in cementing their relationship (Small, 2015). China's support in various infrastructural projects, economic cooperation, and military assistance indicated the depth and resilience of the Pakistan-China strategic alliance, which persisted and evolved in the post-Cold War era (Hussain, et al., 2020).

Post-Cold War biases in Pakistan's foreign policy stemmed from regional security concerns, nuclear proliferation, and diverging priorities with major powers (Sattar, 2020; Amin, 2021). The focus on counter-terrorism led to friction with the US, which questioned Pakistan's efforts in combating extremist elements, affecting the alliance (Gall, 2014). Historical conflicts and geopolitical considerations influenced Pakistan's reevaluation of relations with Russia (Khan, 2019).

Concerns over nuclear proliferation and regional stability hindered complete normalization, highlighting biases from the past. In contrast, the alliance with China grew stronger post-Cold War, characterized by extensive economic, military, and strategic cooperation (Small, 2015). Shared regional interests and countering India's influence remained the cornerstone, minimizing biases and solidifying the partnership (Gill, 2019).

Pakistan's foreign policy 'Post Cold War Era' with major powers saw a mixed landscape. Biases and challenges in alliances were evident, particularly with the United States and Russia, while the enduring partnership with China remained robust. Regional security concerns, divergent priorities, and historical rivalries shaped Pakistan's post-Cold War foreign policy dynamics with major powers.

### **2.3 Regional Dynamics and Neighboring Relations**

During the period from 1947 to 2008, Pakistan's foreign policy regarding its neighbors and regional dynamics was multifaceted. Relations with India were characterized by persistent tensions over the Kashmir dispute, leading to multiple conflicts and sporadic attempts at peace building (Ganguly, 2016). The Afghanistan-Pakistan ties were influenced by the Soviet invasion and subsequent support to Afghan mujahedeen, later complicated by the rise of the Taliban and post-9/11 realignments (Rashid, 2008). Pakistan's relationship with Iran fluctuated between cooperation and rivalry, shaped by shifting domestic interests and geopolitical landscapes (Karim, 2023).

Pakistan's geopolitical relationship with India since 1947 has been entrenched in a complex web of conflicts, strategic maneuvering, and geopolitical intricacies. The regional dynamics, particularly the unresolved Kashmir dispute, have underscored this adversarial relationship, often punctuated by military conflicts and strained diplomatic relations (Amin, 2021). The contentious Kashmir issue, stemming from their partition in 1947, stands as a focal point shaping the geopolitical dimension of their discord. The Indo-Pakistani wars of 1947–1948, 1965, 1971, and the Kargil conflict in 1999 serve as glaring markers of their geopolitical tensions (Ganguly, 2016).

The Kashmir dispute, an unresolved territorial conflict, serves as the epicenter of their geopolitical strife, fueling military standoffs and diplomatic impasses (Paul, 2018). This geopolitical rivalry stems from multifaceted factors, including religious and national identities, historical animosities, and strategic interests. The first Indo-Pakistani war, focusing on the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, introduced external interventions by the United Nations but left the issue unresolved (Ganguly, 2002).

Subsequent conflicts in 1965 and 1971 deepened geopolitical tensions. The Tashkent Declaration and the Simla Agreement aimed at normalization and delineation of the Line of Control in Kashmir, yet the dispute remained unresolved (Ganguly, 2002; Talbot, 2009). Throughout the 1980s, Pakistan's pursuit of nuclear capabilities amid regional struggles in Afghanistan heightened geopolitical strains with India. International support bolstered Pakistan's nuclear ambitions, contributing to the intensification of regional rivalries (Chari, Cheema, & Cohen, 2009).

The nuclear tests by both countries in 1998 escalated global concerns and led to international sanctions (Perkovich, 1999). The Kargil conflict in 1999 exacerbated geopolitical tensions, leading to a pre-conflict status quo despite subsequent peace summits (Ganguly, 2002; Dixit, 2003). Amidst efforts for reconciliation, such as the Agra Summit and the Lahore Declaration, geopolitical tensions persisted, culminating in military standoffs and terrorist attacks, highlighting the fragility of peace initiatives (Riedel, 2002; Ganguly & Hagerty, 2012).

The unresolved Kashmir conflict has been central in shaping the geopolitical landscape, influencing both states' foreign policies, security strategies, and regional alliances (Sattar, 2020). Pakistan's attempts to internationalize the issue and maintain

military parity with India have been central elements of its confrontational geopolitical stance. In essence, the geopolitical dimension between Pakistan and India has been characterized by enduring tensions centered on the unresolved Kashmir issue, nuclear competition, and regional power dynamics, posing continuous threats to stability and security in the region (Amin, 2021; Ganguly, 2016). Table 2.1 is outlining major regional and international conflicts involving Pakistan from 1947 to 2008:

**Table 2.1: Key Conflicts and Pakistan's Role (1947-2008)** (Source: Effendi & Ahmed, 2020; Malik & Zhilong, 2018; Blarel & Ebert, 2015)

<b>Conflict</b>	<b>Year(s)</b>	<b>Nature of Conflict</b>	<b>Pakistan's Role</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Indo-Pakistani War</b>	1947-48	Territorial Dispute	Direct Military Engagement	Ceasefire, Kashmir divided, issue unresolved
<b>Indo-Pakistani War</b>	1965	Territorial Dispute	Direct Military Engagement	Stalemate, led to Tashkent Agreement
<b>Indo-Pakistani War</b>	1971	Secession of Bangladesh	Direct Military Engagement	Creation of Bangladesh, significant loss for Pakistan
<b>Indo-Pak Kargil Conflict</b>	1999	Territorial Dispute	Covert Military Operation	Withdrawal under international pressure, status quo maintained
<b>Soviet-Afghan War</b>	1979-89	Proxy War	Support to Afghan Mujahedeen-US Ally	Soviet withdrawal, emergence of Taliban
<b>War on Terror</b>	Post-2001	Counter-terrorism	Strategic Ally of USA	Ongoing conflict, internal security challenges

Pakistan's geopolitical relationship with Afghanistan has been deeply influenced by historical, ethnic, and strategic factors, notably the Pashtun dynamics and geopolitical interests of regional and global powers. The Durand Line dispute and the Pashtun presence on both sides of the border have continually shaped this relationship (Rashid, 2008). The Durand Line, a longstanding bone of contention, has driven Pakistan's foreign policy objectives toward Afghanistan, focusing on safeguarding territorial integrity and negating Afghan irredentist claims (Brasher & Ramsey, 2023).

Historical disputes and Pashtun nationalism have cast shadows over diplomatic ties despite intermittent cultural exchanges (Barfield, 2022). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 significantly shifted Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan emerged as a key player supporting the Afghan resistance, providing refuge and aiding mujahedeen fighters, aligning with global powers against Soviet expansionism (Yousaf & Adkin, 1992). During the 1980s, Pakistan facilitated the flow of international military and financial aid to the Afghan insurgency, to support and train mujahedeen forces (Coll, 2001). Additionally, Pakistan hosted millions of Afghan refugees, straining its infrastructure (Strand, 1999).

Following the Soviet withdrawal and the fall of the Afghan communist government, Pakistan aimed for a stable, friendly government in Afghanistan, throwing support behind factions, notably the Mujahideen, in pursuit of strategic interests (Rashid, 2008). Post-9/11, Pakistan's foreign policy toward Afghanistan shifted again. President Musharraf's government supported the U.S.-led coalition against terrorism, offering logistical assistance and access to airspace and facilities (Fair, 2014).

However, Pakistan's alignment with U.S. goals was complicated by accusations of harboring and supporting militant groups, blurring the line between collaboration and rivalry (Gall, 2014). The presence of extremist networks along the Afghan border added strain to Pakistan-U.S. relations (Rashid, 2008). Pakistan's foreign policy toward Afghanistan from 1947 to 2008 underwent phases shaped by historical conflicts, geopolitical rivalries, and evolving regional dynamics (Sattar, 2020). It revolved around safeguarding its western border, counteracting Afghan irredentism, and advancing strategic interests, intricately tied to regional power play and the Pashtun question.

Throughout 1947 to 2008, Pakistan and Iran shared a multifaceted relationship shaped by historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors. Initially, both nations forged strong diplomatic ties based on religious and cultural similarities, marked by significant agreements like the 1950 Treaty of Friendship (Karim, 2023). Their alignment within the U.S.-led Western bloc during the Cold War, evident in their membership in CENTO, aimed to counter the perceived communist threat and ensure regional security (Awan, 2018).

Iran's foreign policy focused on maintaining regional hegemony and strengthening relations with the West, diverging from Pakistan's attempts to balance ties with both Iran and Arab nations like Saudi Arabia (Nasr, 2007). The Iranian Revolution of 1979 led to a significant shift in Iran's foreign policy, guided by Islamic unity and anti-Western sentiments, while Pakistan remained closely allied with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, creating a foreign policy challenge for Pakistan (Awan, 2018). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, both nations collaborated within the RCD framework and supported Afghan mujahedeen against the Soviet occupation, despite ideological differences and a struggle for influence in Afghanistan (Takeyh, 2006). However, their relationship soured in the 1990s due to

differing strategies in dealing with the Taliban, causing tensions and border confrontations (Nasr, 2007).

Efforts to maintain bilateral ties persisted through diplomatic engagements and the Islamabad Declaration in 1995, aiming to expand cooperation in trade, investment, and energy despite ongoing geopolitical challenges (Awaz, 2018). Post-9/11, regional dynamics changed, offering an opportunity for Pakistan and Iran to collaborate in rebuilding Afghanistan. Economic endeavors, like the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, showcased efforts toward energy cooperation, albeit amidst the complexities of the Iran-U.S. tensions (Karim, 2023).

Their foreign policy towards each other was a blend of rivalry and cooperation, navigating regional complexities while focusing on shared concerns like trade, economic cooperation, and regional security (Nasr, 2007). Pakistan and Iran continually endeavored to sustain a relationship marked by diplomatic engagements, economic collaboration, and mutual interests in regional security amidst evolving geopolitical landscapes.

## **2.4 Interactions with Muslim Countries and Groups**

Pakistan's foreign policy, shaped by its inception, has strategically and geopolitically engaged with Muslim countries, aiming to solidify relationships based on shared religious and cultural affinities (Sattar, 2020). This concerted effort focused on cultivating robust ties with influential Muslim states such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, Qatar, UAE, and the Gulf Countries. Additionally, Pakistan actively pursued relations with Indonesia, Bangladesh, Central Asian Muslim States, and African Muslim nations, accentuating its role within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to address

mutual concerns and foster collaboration among Muslim nations (Ahmed & Akbarzadeh, 2023).

The alliance between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, born soon after Pakistan's independence, drew strength from shared religious beliefs and a mutual interest in regional stability. Particularly during crises, Saudi Arabia emerged as a crucial ally, offering pivotal financial and diplomatic support (Asseri, 2022). The relationship manifested in close military ties, with Pakistan providing troops and receiving economic aid. Despite occasional tensions stemming from Pakistan's attempts to balance relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the alliance persevered (Siddiqi, 2023).

The bond between Pakistan and Turkey, cultivated since the 1950s, was bolstered by shared democratic values and joint military exercises. Their diplomatic connections deepened as both countries supported each other on various regional issues, including the Kashmir and Cyprus disputes (Hussain, 2008). Their historical, cultural, and ideological similarities fortified this strong relationship, evolving through shifting geopolitical landscapes (Javed, et al, 2023).

Pakistan and Egypt's diplomatic relations, established post-independence, sought to assert their identities in the post-colonial era and promote mutual interests in international forums like the UN. The relationship fluctuated due to Cold War politics and regional power dynamics. Both nations supported each other on multiple global issues but faced strains due to divergent stances on conflicts like the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 and varying regional influences (Bruneau, et al. 2013). However, the two nations sustained diplomatic and military collaboration, emphasizing shared concerns about regional security (Egypt State Information Service. 2023).

Founding the OIC showcased their joint involvement in addressing geo-political concerns of the Muslim world. Their bilateral trade surged, making Malaysia a crucial commercial ally for Pakistan. Multilateral cooperation through forums like the NAM and the UN further solidified their geo-political collaboration (Ahmed & Akbarzadeh, 2023). Diplomatic ties, formed post-Malaysia's independence in 1957, initially centered on mutual support in international forums and shared religious and cultural affinities. Leaders aimed to deepen these connections, emphasizing broader foreign policies and stronger relations with other Muslim-majority nations. Following the 9/11 attacks, their geo-political collaboration intensified, seen in the MoU on defense cooperation in 2002 (Yu, 2021; Bishku, 2021).

Establishing diplomatic ties post-Qatar's independence in 1970 paved the way for a robust geo-political collaboration based on shared Islamic faith. Bilateral cooperation intensified throughout the 1970s and 1980s, addressing geo-political issues like terrorism and regional stability (Khan, 2019). Pakistan's skilled labor further strengthened their geo-political ties. The early 2000s saw an increased strategic partnership, with defense cooperation agreements and expanded economic engagement. Pakistan's geo-political approach towards Qatar emphasized comprehensive collaboration across political, economic, and security realms, affirming their commitment to regional stability and Islamic unity (Cooper & Momani, 2011).

Pakistan's geo-political ties with Indonesia, established in 1950, initially centered on shared principles at the Bandung Conference in 1955, fostering alliances and affirming independence from Cold War power blocs (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023). Tensions arose

during Indonesia's alignment with the West post-1965, and Pakistan's internal challenges led to temporary cooling in relations.

However, their involvement in global forums like the NAM and OIC revived bilateral relations in the 1970s. Post-9/11, both nations faced security concerns and cooperated on counter-terrorism efforts, evident in the 2003 MoU on Counter-Terrorism Cooperation. Enhancements in trade, defense, and culture bolstered their geo-political partnership, culminating in a strategic cooperation pact in 2005 (Khairunnisa, 2021). The historical legacy of East and West Pakistan influenced geo-political ties with Bangladesh post-independence. Tensions and unresolved issues persisted post-Bangladesh's independence in 1971, hindering normalization (Hassan, 2021). Both nations gradually normalized relations through trade, cultural exchanges, and shared diplomatic missions.

Despite shared democratic transitions in the 1990s, strategic divergences hampered deeper cooperation. Geo-political shifts post-9/11 led Pakistan to prioritize counter-terrorism, while Bangladesh navigated its own security challenges, impacting bilateral collaboration. Pakistan's geo-political approach towards Bangladesh reflected a complex historical backdrop, marked by efforts at normalization despite persistent unresolved issues and diverging strategic priorities (Ahmed & Zahoor, 2019).

Pakistan's foreign policy towards the other Gulf states, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Yemen, emphasized cultural and religious ties, evident since gaining independence in 1947. Strategic alliances, notably CENTO and the Baghdad Pact, showcased Pakistan's commitment to regional security (Rizvi, 2004). The 1970s marked a shift with OIC's formation, fostering Islamic unity and deepening Pakistan's relations within the Gulf, especially amid financial aid and support during the Afghan conflict.

The Gulf War in 1990, where Pakistan supported the UN-led coalition against Iraq, reinforced Pakistan's significance for Gulf nations. However, internal unrest affected Pakistan's ties with these nations (Rizvi, 2004). Post-9/11, security cooperation, counter-terrorism efforts, and economic collaborations were revitalized, underlining Pakistan's evolving geo-political strategies towards the Gulf nations (Sattar, 2020). Pakistan's engagement with Central Asia, marked by cultural interest and limited diplomatic ties during Soviet rule, shifted post-Soviet independence in 1991. Prompt recognition and diplomatic relations with the newly independent states by Pakistan highlighted fresh opportunities for economic partnerships and regional integration via groups like ECO (Amin, 2021).

However, extremism, regional instability, and competing interests posed challenges to deeper engagement. The post-9/11 era brought security cooperation, border management, and joint infrastructure projects like CPEC and CASA, as Pakistan sought a balance between global powers and regional stability. Despite hurdles, Pakistan focused on enhancing economic and cultural exchanges, strengthening ties with Central Asian nations (Galimov, 2022).

Pakistan's foreign policy towards African Muslim nations, driven by shared Islamic history, included support for decolonization struggles in the early years. Cold War dynamics altered relations, aligning Pakistan more closely with Western countries, impacting ties with African Muslim nations. Post-Cold War, a proactive approach was adopted, emphasizing economic cooperation and security, countering India's influence geo-politically (Diplo Foundation, 2024). Efforts towards economic ties, peacekeeping, and counter-terrorism showcased Pakistan's multifaceted approach towards African

Muslim countries, promoting cultural exchanges and mutual development despite occasional diplomatic challenges (Sulaiman, 2022).

Pakistan's active role in founding the OIC in 1969 positioned it as a key member, advocating for the Kashmir issue and fostering Islamic unity. During the years after the end of the Cold War, the OIC supported Pakistan in its handling of various problems, of these the Kashmir Conflict and its conduct in the “War on Terror” (Ahmed, 2023a). Pakistan's foreign policy in OIC shifted to tackle the issues of security, trade, and cultural harmony, which in a way strengthened its standing inside the boundaries of Muslim world. The OIC turned into a forum of conflict resolutions, trade exchanges, and security alignments for the benefit of Pakistan (Zikriya et al., 2022).

Pakistan's soft power stance towards the Gulf, CARs, Africa, and inside OIC are interwoven complex of underlying, cultural, and strategic features. These relationships based on alliances, economic collaborations, and security cooperation, have been evolving over time, and shaping Pakistan's foreign policy and regional integration (Amin, 2021). The pattern of interaction between Pakistan and these Muslim states denotes as the high point of those distinctive geopolitical ages, through which the dynamics of the region and global factors were transformed.

This being the case, they were predicated on the factors religious affinities, material concerns and respect that served the interests of diplomatic, economic and defense of these countries. However, despite of occasional genesis of dissonance, Pakistan's foreign policy in the past aimed to develop everlasting associations among Muslim nations (Sattar, 2020). Thus, the regional stability along with the shared objectives among different epochs of the worldwide politics remained the integral part of the history of Pakistan from 1947 to 2008.

## **2.5 Security Concerns, Nuclear Deterrence and Global Interfaces**

Pakistan's nuclearization, which mainly manifested itself through the acquisition of nuclear weapons in the last century's second half, considerably changed Pakistan's regional strategic landscape. The nuclear muscle of Pakistan officially began after 1998, when it successfully conducted the nuclear tests, thus changing the course of geo-political equations (Chapman, 2009). The development of these nuclear capabilities was the end-result of an attempt to gain security maximization amid security threats from India and the other nuclear powers, that were perceived as means for strategic levelling. Meanwhile, this evolution did not only attract scrutiny on the international level but also reshaped the country's image in the eyes of the whole world, depicting direct impact on its diplomatic relations and regional stability (Kapur, 2008).

The security issues that have been engaging the minds of the politicians and military strategists of South Asia often had deep connection with the geopolitics of Pakistan (Montclos, 2013). The adversarial Indo-Pak circumstances were intensified by nuclearization degenerating into a normal state of strategic competition with security dilemmas within the region (Ganguly & Kapur, 2008). Nuclear states of two had nuclearized the region and built up the mistrust. The stakes increased and the war could be escalated any time.

The interplay between security worries, nuclear capacities functioning as strategic tools in the foreign policy making and geopolitical ambitions has contributed to a delicate balance of power and strategic maneuvering in South Asia which in turn affect the state of the regional stability (Tellis, 2001). The worldwide reactions towards Pakistan's nuclear initiative created divergent possible outcomes that reshaped the political landscape of the

region. Internationally, the community was worrisome about nuclear proliferation more-specifically the risks involved through a nuclear-armed Pakistan. Other states adhered to sanctions and containment, but the said way was not acceptable to others who participated in diplomatic talks to control the risks involved in nuclearized South Asia (Clarke, 2013).

This international intervention and response, in particular, transformed Pakistan's role within the global geopolitics, altering its system of alliances, trade relations and diplomacy outlook (Khan, 2020). The geopolitical consequences of Pakistan's heritage also surge outside the region to redraw global power structures and conception about nuclear proliferation. The country's status as a nuclear power altered its significance in international affairs, leading to nuanced geopolitical considerations by major powers (Ahmed, 1999).

Geo-strategic significance of Pakistan has played crucial role in shaping its alliance network, trade relations and security issues. It is located by a route of energy and trade; thus, it is a meeting point where regional connectivity initiatives and actors focus their strategies. This puts it in a position considered favorable for foreign policy decisions and engagements with various regional and global actors (Hoontrakul, et al. 2014). Being positioned in a geopolitically strategic area, Pakistan has become the focus of attention from all the leading world powers which in turn enables the world powers to follow their own particular policies towards Pakistan (Shafqat, 2009).

The United States, being a global player, engaged with Pakistan during the Cold War and the War on Terror, as Fair (2014) mentions. While China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative and its strategic role in the region has also put it at odds with Pakistan, the economic and infrastructural cooperation between the two countries has got stronger.

These inter-relationships have impacted a lot on Pakistani foreign policy matters and issues surrounding international powers mainly (Gul et al., 2020).

International institutions have shown to be a crucible of change that has influenced Pakistan geopolitically. The country's participation in groups like UN, IMF, World Bank, and the sundry regional platforms has taken the foreign policy determinations. Institutional involvements with these organizations is mostly done so with financial assistance, development programs and diplomacy (Keohane & Nye, 2011). The set of agreements and conditions within these institutions have considerably shaped Pakistan's foreign policy choices, thereby determining the image of the country at a global scale and its strategic regional movements as well (Fasih Uddin, 2022; Mansoor et al., 2023).

Pakistan's trade and economic commitments, in turn, exercised important influence on the choice of its foreign policy priorities. Economic interactions, encompassing bilateral and multilateral trade agreements or cooperation frameworks, have always been a major factor in shaping its approach to diplomacy and selecting strategic partners (Harvey, 2007). Pakistan was urged to rely on lucrative dependencies as the geopolitical situation was being shaped. Both internal and external forces have played a role in the determination of foreign policy with dependence on assistance from outside in the form of loans, grants and investments aiding or dictating the alignment and choices of foreign policies (Malik, 2017).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The period from 1947 to 2008 witnessed a complex interplay of mainly geopolitical factors that significantly influenced Pakistan's foreign policy decisions. Several key elements emerged as critical determinants in shaping the country's approach to international relations during this era.

Comprehensively explained is the geopolitical dimensions of Pakistan's foreign policy, and firstly, Pakistan being in the 'center of region' remained the main pillar in its foreign policy. Pakistan at the confluence of South, Middle and Central Asia, its varied geographic importance of the country have been responsible for its alliances, its interactions at international level and its regional engagements. Its existence near to the security vulnerable zones and the important trade routes determined its security plans and strategic objectives (Wani, 2022).

Security concerns played a central role in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy, particularly in the context of the ongoing Indo-Pak rivalry and the Cold War dynamics. The perceived threats from India, coupled with the alliance system during the Cold War in which Pakistan aligned with the United States, significantly influenced the country's foreign policy objectives. The states' development of nuclear missiles along with this caused a new shift in the security system, which in its turn invariably impacted regional stability and global sentiments (Fair, 2014).

The chapter, in concluding summarized the various perspectives and aspects of Pakistani traditional foreign policy from 1947-2008. Review of the historical backdrop and the main ideas that drove Pakistan's foreign policy through the ages designed the foregoing chapter. It then focused on the aims and difficulties encountered by Pakistan during each time periods. It emerged from the chapter that a lot of elements, mainly geopolitical motivations, agreements, regional dynamics, and global power relations had strong effect on Pakistan's foreign affairs.

The chapter underlined that the cooperation and bonding with world major powers, Pakistan's neighbors, and the other fellow Muslim nations were the most important factors

that deeply affect the execution of the foreign policy of Pakistan. Furthermore, the section accentuated the magnitude of sustaining a preservation equilibrium among the interests of Pakistan for the regional peace and stability and its national security objectives as well. Apparently, this stress the state's competence in overcoming the hardship namely territorial disputes, regional warfare and the war on terror that made a great deal on the foreign policy choices. On the whole; realism and strategically characterized Pakistan's traditional foreign policy approaches at this epoch.

The interplay of these geopolitical factors played a significant role in shaping Pakistan's current foreign policy decisions and laid the groundwork for its subsequent re-orientation. Contemporary geopolitics provides insight into the neoliberal approaches used to analyze Pakistan's foreign policy. These approaches, which prioritize free markets, economic integration, and institutional roles, form the foundation of foreign policy evolution. The neoliberal sovereignty framework helps explain how economic factors and market-driven policies have influenced the transformation of Pakistan's foreign policy in the years that followed.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **The Idea of Geo-economic Reorientation of Foreign Policy of Pakistan**

Since its inception, the foreign policy of Pakistan have been, however, overwhelmingly geopolitical in nature. In spite, the 21st century presents a novel perspective: the undeniable power and sway towards geo-economics (Luttwak, 1990). The globe is currently undergoing transformation that has unusually increased the volume of interdependence between different countries and activities that mainly revolve around market forces (Keohane & Nye, 2011). This section elucidated a contending view i.e. an economic revamp of Pakistan's foreign policy.

#### **3.1 Overview of Geo-economic Reorientation**

This strategic transformation of the foreign policy of Pakistan through economic integration departs from the traditional geopolitical strategies and underlines economic diplomacy by resorting to economic advantages achieved through the country's geographical location and resources, aimed at achieving short-term and long-term economic gains (Prime Minister Office, 2021). This chapter is a seminal one that sought to demonstrate Pakistan's complicated foreign policy transformation that encompassed its historical context, drivers, and significance in the dynamic international arena (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023).

The most prominent feature of Pakistan's foreign policy pre-2008 was mainly based on geopolitics and security issues (Sattar, 2020). In the 1990s, the projects like

Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) projects were introduced as vital regional connectivity initiatives, aimed at improving energy access and fostering economic cooperation. However, geopolitical tensions, particularly related to Pakistan's relations with its regional neighbors and global powers, stymied their implementation. The QTTA, proposed as an energy corridor connecting Turkmenistan to Pakistan, faced challenges related to the security environment in Afghanistan, the uncertain political situation in Pakistan, and the lack of consistent regional cooperation (Rauf, 2021).

Similarly, TAPI struggled with delays stemming from both political instability and concerns regarding security, particularly in Afghanistan. These projects, despite their potential, remained largely unrealized due to competing strategic interests, regional rivalries and global geopolitical dynamics. The situation began to shift post-2008, as efforts were renewed under more stable political climates, especially with the shifting role of China and the United States in the region (Felbab-Brown, 2020).

While post 2008 era displayed different dimensions than before, it also remained high with several challenges and opportunities that led to the reviewing of old foreign policies in a new perspective. Being located at the heart of the map, Pakistan is surrounded by economically powerful nations including China and India, which offer different routes for commerce. This created unlimited scope for an economic engagement and for the integration of the country in regional and global economic markets. The geo-economic repositioning is the transition from the being a security-oriented and conventional towards the one, which is based on economy and development goal, oriented (Prime Minister Office, 2021).

The National Security Policy (NSP) is a primary document that outlines the shift in Pakistan's foreign policy toward geo-economics. The NSP, introduced in 2022, emphasizes the country's economic security as a key pillar, highlighting the shift from traditional defense-based security to economic considerations, such as trade, infrastructure development, and regional connectivity (GoP, 2022). This shift directly aligns with the concepts regarding Pakistan's foreign policy transformation. The document reflects the government's recognition of the need to foster economic partnerships and prioritize market-oriented policies to ensure long-term stability and growth.

Pakistan's economic geographic re-orientation is also characterized by its rising ability to efficiently collaborate with the other regions e.g. Central Asian Republics (CARs), European Union (EU), The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and others (Zuridinov, 2022). Moreover, opportunities for integration comprises not only regional cooperation but it also proceeds unilateral free trade thus implies favorable economic opportunities (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023; Willaimson, 1999). It is for such type of integration that Pakistan considers itself in order to withstand economic constraints and grow.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) makes an enormous difference to the economic setting of Pakistan, especially in the IT, agriculture, minerals and energy sectors, which are of paramount importance to the economic growth of the country and prosperty (Latief & Lefen, 2019). With this focus on FDI, political leaders therefore initiated an environment (i.e., laws, rules, body and regulations) that creates a conducive environment to FDI, sector selection based on high returns and economic stability in particular (SIFC, n.d).

Under the BRI, flagship project, CPEC, has been Islamic Republic of Pakistan's strategic and geo-economic success. CPEC gave impetus to Pakistan's infrastructural development, in addition to its strong invoking of global economic collaboration, which in turn increased its dependency on China (Jamil, et al., 2019). This initiative can be considered as a substantial breakthrough in Pakistan's foreign policy, where economic consideration has started to reshape the decisions of the country's foreign affairs (Salik, 2023).

Moreover, Pakistan's policy of Vision Central Asia, Look Africa and others are evident as to its expatiation to shift partnership beyond stereotypical friends (Prime Minister's Office, 2021a; MoCom, n.d.-a). These policies depict that how partners have to be active in diplomatic engagements at both public and private levels and suggest having trade and investments with all possible arrangements that is likely to unlock new markets and investment opportunities (Sulaiman, 2022).

To be concise, a Pakistan's shift of its foreign policy is a tactical maneuver to the new international economic setup in the light of neo-liberalism. It emphasizes the vital role of economic diplomacy, regional integration, and the launch of new relations for sustainable growth and development. Here, this chapter showed the side and angle of economic reorientation explaining its rationale, actions, and possible consequences for long-run economic trajectory in Pakistan.

### **3.2 Key Drivers for Geo-economic Reorientation in Pakistan's Foreign Policy**

The restructuring of Pakistan's foreign relation in the global economy is inspired by different factors that affect external and internal environment. This shift underscores a

strategic recalibration towards leveraging economic growth and development as primary objectives in its international relations (GOP, 2022).

The core of Pakistan's foreign policy was influenced by political uncertainties, security, nuclear enhancement and regional rivalries (Ali, Ahmad, & Shah, 2019). The re-orientation of Pakistan's foreign policy post 2008 on geo-economy has been one of the key contour of this strategic shift. Concerning the increasing awareness about the linkage between economic stability and national security, Pakistan has been strongly recommitting to economic securitization in their diplomatic encounters and international partnerships (GOP, 2022). The economic security is prioritized as objective and a central pillar that the government is building upon for other national security purposes.

The internal issues range from fiscal deficits to debt vulnerabilities and the need for sustainable development. The external challenges are global economic transitions and geopolitically related issues in the region. Sensitizing the base of economy (diversifying) and seeking for foreign investments are the ways Pakistan is opting to follow (Bhatti, & Shahrukh, 2023). There is a systematic effort to get dedicated foreign direct investments, trade expand energy securitization and take part in global value chains (SIFC, n.d).

Moreover, projects like, the CPEC clearly shows the importance of the infrastructure investment and regional integration that are the core elements for this initiative (Fazal, Khan & Ali, 2023). One of the key aspects for Pakistan's economic resilience is the implementation of these measures. These measures in the long term will enable Pakistan to withstand external threats and reduce overreliance on a single economic partner (Salik, 2023). By doing this Pakistan will be in a position to ensure a stable economy, offering an environment where the national interests are safe. This more holistic

treatment of the issue of economic security marks a broader shift in the country's geo-economic re-orientation and reducing role of military accordingly to the complex interdependence paradigm of neo-liberal doctrine, giving it the ability to attract global partnerships that places the country as an attractive destination (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Globalization has been among the key driver of Pakistan's foreign policy with respect to economic re-orientation and intended growth. Two-way causality is observed in the association between globalization and resource consumption, and policies are being molded for ensuring sustainable resource upgrading and economic balanced development simultaneously (Hassan et al. 2019).

The connection between foreign capital and economic growth is, in fact, a simulation, as it is relatively hard to understand and complex. Inflows that include debt service as well as FDI have been observed to have both sides of the coin; positive and negative impacts on Pakistan's long-term economic growth indicating the need for cautious and strategic management of foreign capital (Ali, 2014).

Foreign remittance and FDI are a good source of foreign exchange for Pakistan that stimulates the growth while the imports put negative impact on economy development (Rehman et al., 2020). This reveals the significance of creating an environment that is friendly to investment and remittances and hence spurs economic growth. On a global scale, geo-economic preferences are being set by, emerging markets, digital interactions and routes, which is turning the world around (Tahir, Khan and Shah, 2015).

The tourism sector creates a tremendous economic value that manifests itself through GDP, FDI, energy development, agriculture development and poverty reduction

(Alam et al, 2020). A traveler to the venue not only watch the joys of the host country but also seek the avenues of commerce for international trade. This illustrates the role of tourism industry as one of the main factors that is considered to catalyze Pakistan's economic growth in the future (Khan et al., 2020).

One of the key areas which Pakistan is trying to make up for the less dependence in relationship with the United States is improving ties with its traditional partners like China and Saudi Arabia, and also reaching out neighbors like Iran, to balance, and thus, diversify its foreign policy (Gul et al., 2020). This diversification is being applied for limiting the dependence on any single country, for instance the US, and be a basis for the sustained development of a foreign policy, which is more multi-layered. (Curtis, 2012).

Pakistan's paradigm shift in foreign policy has identified the Central Asia and African region as a key area of significance due to its vast trade and market potential (Prime Minister's Office, 2021a; MoCom, n.d.-a). Economic diplomacy in Africa and other emerging markets is seen as crucial for diversifying economic partnerships and reducing dependency on traditional allies (Sulaiman, 2022).

The geo-economic reorientation of Pakistan's foreign policy is a response to a confluence of regional, global, and internal factors. This reorientation is marked by a focus on economic development, diversification of foreign relations, regional integration, privatization, cooperation and addressing security and environmental challenges. The ultimate aim is to position Pakistan as a key player in the global economy, leveraging its strategic location and economic potential. The main elements of neo-liberalism and complex interdependence are very much visible in shifting the focus from traditional foreign policies to more of a liberal (Harvey, 2007).

### **3.3 Pakistan's Geo-economic Options and Strategies**

Pakistan's pivot towards geo-economic strategies in its foreign policy has been marked by several significant options and strategies (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023). These measures are not only the necessary instruments of the economic order but also the expression of Pakistan's intent to play a more independent and constructive part in the process of regional integration and reconciliation (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The primary element of the geo-economic initiative of Pakistan is to achieve deeper understanding extended to regional associations. This strategy has the vision of a regional connectivity structure where Pakistan can benefit from being in a strategic location and become a gateway of international trade and energy corridors (MoFA, 2024). Such successful integration though demands competitive exchange rate and robust industrial foundations (Williamson, 1998).

The CPEC, which is considered the focal point of Pakistan's geo-economic, realigned prioritized regional integration through cooperation in trade, finance, infrastructure, and regional organizations (MoPD&S, 2024). The CPEC, as part of BRI, not only helps improve conditions of Pakistani infrastructure sector, energy sector and industrial development but also promises to link Pakistan with China, CARs and neighbours through sea and land routes and turn the country into a regional economic hub (Wolf, 2018).

The project, is not only an economic project but acquire the ability to strengthen diplomatic relations and attract investments from globe, thereby making Pakistan more economically autonomous and help increase its regional political influence (Jamil, Shah,

& Malik, 2019). It increases the country's positive economic perspectives and develops smooth transportation, energy availability, and new commerce moves (Shahzad, 2021).

The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was likewise a good example; the body is tasked with the responsibility of attracting foreign investments to generate economic growth. SIFC is established at country-level with participation from all Provincial Chief Ministers and the Army Chief. The main objective of SIFC is to create opportunities for FDI and investment in various sectors such as agriculture, IT, minerals, etc. Formation of this entity overcomes government deports, and difficulties in investor relation which may lead to a sunnier collaboration with the involved nations (SIFC, 2024).

Geo-economic variables, being the important factor of regional security policy of Pakistan, stand out as one of the core aspects. The development of trade routes plan has a huge influence on regional politics, specifically relating to India and Afghanistan (Chaudhuri, 2019). Economic dependence between Pakistan and other regional powers may also influence the stability of the country's relations in the region (Faisal, 2018).

Another key contour of Pakistan's economic logic is the assurance of energy security. The administration plans to promote the expansion of energy generating capacities and to prime the use of indigenous resources in order to satiate the prevailing larger demand for energy (Bahoo et al., 2018). Hence, this is key factor for economic expansion not only domestically but internationally as well by ensuring peace in the region (Kumar, 2010).

Yet another aspect of Pakistan's geo-economic strategy is fortunate to be endowed with a variety of touristic spots. Options also presents avenues for Pakistan to unwind itself

culturally and naturally. It is meant to be a way through which tourism growth and job creation are fostered (Alam, Ahmad, & Nargiza, 2020). This, therefore, is consistent with the overall purpose of bringing about the economy diversification and establishing new points of growth in line with neo-liberalist paradigm (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

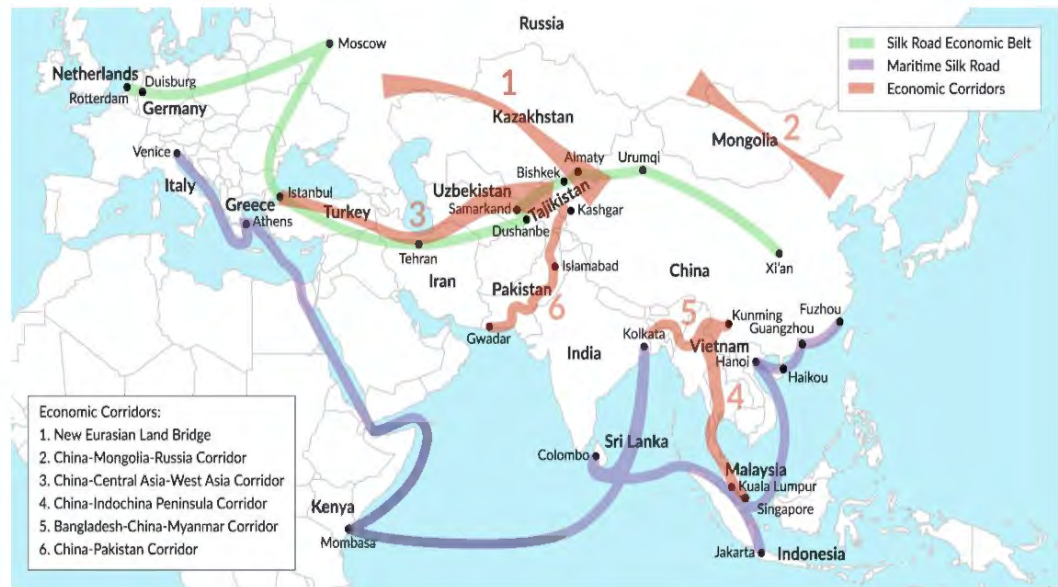
While geo-economics is a significant instrument in solving existing global issues, it also stumbles upon some dealing problems. Concerns focused on whether political stability is interrupted, the security worries and the efficient administration of foreign debts (Sikandar & Wahid, 2019). Consequently, in addition to South Asian location, Pakistan's economic interactions continue to be played out within a geopolitical niche (Khursheed et al., 2019).

Pakistan's geo-economic tools and mechanisms employ a multi-dimensional approach that is directed toward maximizing the benefits of its strategic location that include ensuring economic uphold to justify business and regional cooperation and prosperity in line with neo-liberalist tendencies (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

### **3.4 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Its Impact in Re-orientation**

The CPEC, a multi-billion-dollar initiative, is a critical component of China's broader BRI. Following figure exhibits the channels of economic corridors under BRI:

**Map 3.1 Economic Corridors under BRI (Source: Chaudhuri, 2019)**



The economic, social and geopolitical effects that are involved are distinct and wide-ranging. It could not be denied that CPEC would have the outstanding impression on Pakistan's economic growth. It possess the ability to affect the growth of GDP, trade expansions as well as spreading of profits (Fazal, et al., 2023). The infrastructure development under CPEC consists of energy projects, agriculture, special economic zones that can set a motor for industrial development and leading the modernization of the sector of transportation (Arshed et al., 2022).

In addition to this, CPEC is anticipated to bring new jobs into the market whereby, it will be of great contribution to poverty reduction. Firstly, CPEC envisions a substantial movement of the infrastructure as well as energy projects stimulation. These projects are targeting the resolution of Pakistan's perpetual energy deficiency which is the root cause of industrial degradation as well as of the poor standard of living and health ridden communities (Bahoo et al., 2018). The Gwadar port development that is the cornerstone of

CPEC can play a major part catalyzing Pakistan into a transshipment and trading hub (Wolf, 2016).

Moreover, CPEC has multi-faceted socio-economic effect which is beyond the solution of economic factors. It can solve governance problems associated with community decentralization and stimulate social sector development, including education and health (Khalid et al., 2020). Besides the advantages of the project associated with its economic impact (Jobs and Tourism), environmental concerns regarding risks related to energy projects, deforestation and increased vehicle traffic could also be raised (Kausar et al., 2019).

The deliberations have resulted in meticulous negotiations and tradeoffs that can eventually counter interprovincial and federal-provincial disputes (Ahmed, 2019). Nevertheless, the inter-provincial division was also resulted by this massive investment project, particularly the location of resources and the projects, that might hence add up to the negative impacts of the nation-building process and hence the social integration. (Gul, Ishaque, & Asghar, 2021).

CPEC has profound implications for the regional geopolitics and security that keeps the regional countries concerned and vigilant about future of CPEC. This project has a dual aspect in that it is not only an economic strategic cooperation but leading to a strategic reordering in region power dynamics, particularly with regards to India and Afghanistan (Lim, 2019). Establishing a corridor could end up being both instable and stable if not utilized properly, but it should match the larger framework of the region (Kuszevska & Nitza-Makowska, 2021).

On the other hand, despite the fact that CPEC works like a double-edged sword, its opportunities are not devoid of challenges, which are in line with the geopolitical aspects, the debt sustainability as well as the concern of economic sovereignty. The corridor has become overwhelmingly the subject of debate among the scholars where there are some who are of the opinion that it might lead, to massive economic growth, and others who theorize that, it can worse, result into subjugation to economic rules of China (McCartney, 2020). Human resource development is the reserve of CPEC to have immense impact on the economy of Pakistan. This is possible only if sufficient attention is paid to it. Human resource development becomes a capital pillar of the economy by tapping into their benefits (Ahmed et al., 2017).

Public sentiments is one of the main factors in studying the influence of CPEC on Pakistan's social-economic contour. The public's favorability or otherwise toward the CPEC project may determine how successful the enterprise is and the extent to which the whole population embraces it (Sultan, 2017). The CPEC is considered a crucial project that holds powerful capacity to foster a substantial economic development, improve the infrastructure and energy industries as well as touch on the socio-economic dimensions (Arshed et al., 2021).

By all means, globalization is not without its difficulties which require proper handling, such as environmental issues, regional inequalities and international politics. The success of CPEC is extremely important by navigating these concerns and thus use many of these development opportunities for larger sustainable development.

### 3.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Geo-economic Reorientation

Pakistan's shift towards a geo-economic orientation in its foreign policy presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities. This reorientation is driven by the need to exploit its strategic geographic location, diversify its economy, and enhance regional connectivity. Following Table 3.1 shows Main Challenges and Opportunities in Geo-Economic Reorientation:

**Table 3.1 Main Challenges and Opportunities in Geo-Economic**

**Reorientation** (Source: Williamson, 1998; Sadia & Aziz, 2020; Yousaf & Tabassum, 2003; Sulaiman, 2022; Kouser et al., 2019; Ahmed et al., 2017; Gul et al., 2021; Curtis, 2012)

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Developing a <b>competitive industrial sector</b> and managing <b>economic instability</b>	<b>Enhancing regional trade and economic growth</b>
Addressing internal <b>political instability</b> and <b>security issues</b>	<b>Leveraging projects like CPEC</b> for infrastructural development
<b>Balancing foreign relations</b> with major powers like the US and China	<b>Diversifying foreign relations</b> , including with African nations and CARs
<b>Mitigating environmental and social impacts</b> of infrastructure projects	<b>Focusing on human resource development</b> for societal progress
<b>Reducing regional disparities</b> and social polarization	Achieving economic independence and <b>international bargaining power</b>

One of the primary challenges is establishing a dynamic and competitive industrial sector to support policies like unilateral free trade (Williamson, 1998). Economic

instability, coupled with inadequate industrial development, could hinder Pakistan's ability to engage effectively in regional trade and economic partnerships. Internal political instability and security issues pose significant challenges to implementing a consistent and effective geo-economic strategy in line with neo-liberalism (Sadia & Aziz, 2020). Regional tensions, particularly with India, and internal security threats could disrupt economic initiatives and regional connectivity efforts.

Conventionally, Pakistan's foreign policy has been inclined to that of major powers; a characteristic that has shaped its relationships with major powers like America and China (Sattar, 2020). The problem of seeking the equilibrium that lets the state to not rely heavily on any external entity yet having cooperation is the most difficult task (Yousaf & Tabassum, 2003).

The high environmental and social costs of large-scale infrastructure projects, like those that characterize CPEC, are a notable challenge too. Trampling on rights of local inhabitants and development without caring about the environment can trigger some protests and ecological problems (Kouser et al., 2019). The approach of geoeconomic strategies that include many big infrastructure projects could go onto dividing the masses that are developed through and thus undermine national unity (Gul et al., 2021).

An international reconfiguring geo-economically provides a platform where alliances can emerge stronger among the states that promotes trade, stability and growth (Keohane & Nye, 2011). CPEC and regional understanding like ECO, SCO, etc. bring a wide range of noticeable opportunities for many countries within the region such as the economic growth, infrastructure development and the visions of energy security (Rauf, 2019).

The shifting geo-economic orientation of Pakistan enabled the country to expand its foreign relations away from the traditional security-centred alliances (Sulaiman, 2022) towards a diverse variety of economic and diplomatic contacts, which includes the African countries under the ‘Look Africa Policy’ and the Central Asian countries (CARs) (Prime Minister's Office, 2021a; MoCom, n.d.-a).

Pakistan realized its economic freedom and self-reliance on foreign grants and trying to negotiate at par with other countries when it prioritizes economic diplomacy as the strategy (Curtis, 2012). The strategy constituted by economic growth and development implies manpower development as a concurrent priority. Moreover, allocating resources to fight poverty could result in improvements in educational outcomes, healthcare delivery, and general societal improvement (Ahmed et al., 2017).

The delicate dance between challenges and prospects of Pakistan's pivot to geo-economy in its foreign policy is the essence of this balancing act. However, it can confront limitations about economic instability, political and security questions, and environmental issues. It is also important to realize that there is a huge potential for inter-regional integration, socioeconomic growth and diversification of foreign relations, which bring optimism for the future. To realize its ambitions for the international and regional economic arena, Pakistan has taken steps to cross such hurdles optimally in line with neo-liberalism (SIFC, 2024; GoP, 2022; Harvey, 2007)

### **3.6 Essence of Geo-economic Reorientation in the Foreign Policy of Pakistan**

A geo-economic reorientation of the foreign policy of Pakistan, which is far from its typical security-fixated approach and rather includes economic engagement and regional connectivity, is a critical juncture (GoP, 2022). Positioning oneself strategically

based on historical strengths and the trends of global and regional politics has been something that Pakistan has been doing (Amin, 2021).

Through its aspirations to broaden regional alliances, as well as policy formulation towards the free trade zone, Pakistan interposes itself as an active and key player in the economy of the region. It also hinges upon an enhanced investment sector, and the development of a competitive exchange rate (Williamson, 1998). In this regard, Pakistan is adopting this orientation and advocates for diversification of their foreign policy, trying to give up on its dependency on the United States as a traditional ally and opens up for new closer ties with other countries like China, Saudi Arabia and even neighbors such as Iran (Associated Press, 2024; Curtis, 2012).

CPEC is catalyst of this transformation era as it holds the source of doing better through infrastructure, energy and the projects related the trade facilitation (Jamil et al., 2019).. Pakistan's 'Look Africa Policy' and other regions engagement is a major step towards diversifying its foreign policy and shedding new light on an already-available economic niche (Sulaiman, 2022), all in lined with the neo-liberal idea.

The Pakistan has multiple advantages to win this game, but it faces some key impediments to accomplish the mentioned geo-economic reorientation. Political instability at home, economic matters, debt issues, competition and security challenges in the neighborhood are common barriers that conflict strive to overcome (Afzal, & Naseem, 2018). Apart from that, the conundrum relating economic development and environmental sustainability holds a tremendous weight, and among the things to be done are the attempts to get over with social-economic segregation and inter-provincial tensions (Gul et al., 2021).

Pakistan's foreign policy now is at the hinge of whether to strive for geo-economic aspirations or whether to continue to accept geo-strategic realities. Nevertheless, economic issues remain a priority; however, security issues, which are of great significance in its relationship with India and others, have not been ignored (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023; Montclos, 2013). Its geo-strategic position close to the Arabian Peninsula, Horn of Africa, and Central Asia makes it one of the strategically desirable countries for the world's global and regional powers in a broad scope (Shafqat, 2009).

To bracket it, Pakistan's realignment towards geo-economics in its foreign policy is response to the changing globalized context. Rather than being a respite for the current set-up, it is more about new direction towards economic liberty, regional integration and diplomatic balance (Harvey, 2007). However, it is not without its difficulties, too. Achieving social, political and ecological goals with sound economic policy, i.e. security issues, is a complicated task, which requires conducting in-depth deliberations. The course of the future of the Pakistan's foreign policy will be determined as to the degree it is able to overcome these problems and avail the advantages of its strategic geographical location and modify nature of world politics, upon which the country has taken several steps (Salik, 2023).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **The Interplay of Geo- Economics and Geo- Politics in the Foreign Policy of Pakistan**

This chapter focuses on ascertaining the interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics in the foreign policy of Pakistan among major powers, neighboring countries and Muslim states post-2008 with the prism of neo-liberalism.

#### **4.1 Overview of the Post-2008 Foreign Policy Landscape of Pakistan**

Since 2008, Pakistan's foreign policy landscape has undergone significant transformations, navigating a complex interplay between geo-economics and geo-politics. This period witnessed strategic recalibrations in response to regional and global dynamics, emphasizing economic imperatives while considering geopolitical alignments (Rustam et al., 2023).

Pakistan has prioritized its economic integration and diplomacy and taken as a special conduit for long-lasting foreign policy tool by the start of 21<sup>st</sup> century particularly post 2008 (MoFA, n.d.-a; Curtis, 2012). The CPEC was the main launching pad to furthering the economic ties with China and economic diplomacy with globe. This project symbolized Pakistan's willingness to form economic partnerships and a major shift towards geo-economics (MoPD&S, 2024; Khan & Liu, 2019). Also, Pakistan's engagement in regional economic forums and attempts to find commercial corridors with Central Asian states further showcased the zeal of the country to support economic ties with the region (Khetran & Khalid, 2019). Similarly, the activities with the GCC member states have been relevant in the sector of energy and mining as well other economic partnerships (Siddiq, 2021).

Simultaneously, Pakistan's post-2008 foreign policy has been shaped by intricate security challenges. The repercussions of the War on Terror have significantly influenced Pakistan's strategic stance, especially in its relationship with the United States (Fair, 2012). The evolving security dynamics in Afghanistan have been a key focus, affecting Pakistan's geopolitical alignments. Facilitating peace talks and addressing concerns about the Afghan border have been central to Pakistan's strategic interests (Oztig, 2018). Additionally, strained relations with India have added complexity to regional stability (Yaseen et al., 2016).

Pakistan's geo-economic endeavors have implications for domestic development. Initiatives like CPEC aim to stimulate economic growth and infrastructural development within the country (Salik, 2023). However, challenges related to equitable distribution of economic benefits and concerns over debt sustainability require careful attention. The integration of geo-economic policies with domestic development agendas has brought about regional disparities (McCartney, 2020). While certain areas have experienced infrastructural growth, others continue to face challenges, necessitating a more inclusive development approach.

Looking at the Pakistan's foreign policy from neo-liberal perspective helps to elucidate the nexus of economic liberalization, global market integration, and geopolitical preferences. This economic development and infrastructure projects focus on market-oriented growth paradigm correspond to the neoliberal policy, which are aimed at market-led growth and cooperation among states (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Yet, the factors imposed by the geopolitical tensions gave evidence to the bounds exhibiting the complex

interdependence in suggest the validity of national interests as primary consideration for foreign policy decision-making (Brown, 2016).

#### **4.2 Post-2008 Pakistan: Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics with Major Players**

The foreign relations of Pakistan with a cluster of major important countries, including the USA, Russia, and China, have witnessed a lot of changing dynamics in the period onwards the 2008 (Sattar, 2020). In this part, the geographical policies and the impact of these policies on the relations of Pakistan with front-runners in the international arena are discussed. Crucial factors in the relationships with other countries and their existence in the Pakistan's national interests have been realized and cannot be overlooked (Amin, 2021).

Security and economic development are the basis of strong relations with the world. Through the investigation of the changing character of Pakistan's diplomatic collaboration with the U.S., Russia, and China, this work received valuable information about change in alliances, economic capabilities, and factors of geopolitics that have greatly influenced Pakistan's policies concerning matters of foreign affairs (Sattar, 2020). This chapter sought to analyze, in detail, the complex connections between the major players and Pakistan, highlighting various political events, economic policies and regional impacts through the filter of the neo-liberalism theory (Harvey, 2007).

Since 2008, Pakistan has aimed to further develop its foreign policy orientation in relation to major powers through geo-economics and strategic partnerships when the world also experienced drastic changes (Curtis, 2012). The country's relationships with the United States, China, and Russia have been marked by evolving priorities, with each partnership being influenced by various geopolitical and geo-economic factors.

#### **4.2.1 US-Pakistan: Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics**

The United States and Pakistan's dynamics have changed significantly since 2008, due to economic and geopolitical condition among others. The analysis is based to the connection by taking into consideration the function of trade, investment and economic assistance as well bringing to the light the impact of neo-liberalism ideas on the interdependence of the two countries. The bilateral relationship also are examined to cover the geo-political dimensions with prism of complex interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The period after 2008 witnessed a new strategy towards enhancing Pakistan and the United States economic entanglement that was observed through the seer point of neo-liberalism. This led to the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act of 2009 that increased non-military aid to Pakistan substantially with a sharp focus on the enhancement of the country's infrastructure, health system, and educational capabilities (The White House, 2015). The significance of economic interlinking, which provided a basis for states to develop interests and cooperation that enhance power and stability, is highlighted by complex interdependence of neo-liberalism (Frieden & Lake, 2002). The Act promoted trade and investment as important engines of growth and stability in an effort to improve the long-term economic connection between the two nations.

In order to improve bilateral trade and investment, Pakistan and the US also signed the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) in 2012 (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2012). Neoliberal concepts underpinned this pact, which aimed to lower trade restrictions, make investment easier, and promote economic progress between both countries (Harvey, 2007). The emphasis on trade and investment as a way to

strengthen ties demonstrated how it has influenced Pakistan's foreign policy in the years following 2008.

After 2008, geopolitical issues continued to have an impact on Pakistan's relations with the United States. Neo-liberals assert that cooperation on regional security has developed into an essential component of bilateral relations because both countries are interested in promoting stability in South Asia (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Pakistan's involvement in the US-led war on terror, especially in light of the Afghan crisis, has had a significant impact on their relationship. However, Pakistan's relations with the United States have run into trouble due to India's growing regional prominence and allegations of double games (Gall, 2014).

Neo-liberalism acknowledges the value of competition among governments while also underlining the benefits of cooperation and interdependence (Frieden & Lake, 2002). Since the US-India civil nuclear agreement exposed the potential for a shift in the regional balance of power, Pakistan has been concerned about India's expanding economic and geopolitical connections with the US (Pant, 2011). Nevertheless, despite these challenges, the US has been funding Pakistan's nuclear development due to its emphasis on nonproliferation and nuclear security. The two states' continued cooperation in areas of shared interest made possible by notions of complex interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 2011) within the neo-liberal emphasis on cooperation and reliance (Kronstadt, 2015).

The shifting US administrations in the years after 2008 had an impact on Pakistan's foreign policy as well. Neo-liberalism, according to Frieden and Lake (2002), acknowledges the influence of internal politics on a state's foreign policy. As a result, the nature of the US administration's relationship with Pakistan as well as its goals have altered.

For instance, the Obama administration's focused on counter-terrorism and regional security led to increased cooperation between Pakistan and the United States, especially in light of the war in Afghanistan (The White House, 2013).

The Trump administration's more combative stance towards Pakistan, which included the suspension of military funding, marked a departure from earlier US policy (Ryan & Morello, 2018). To this day, the Biden administration stated a desire to resume working with Pakistan and get involved in finding solutions in a variety of fronts, which included but are not limited to regional security and economic development (Afzal, 2023).

Neo-liberal orientation in the relations between the countries is manifested by the emphasis on pooling their efforts to ensure the security, promote trade and investment, and achieve economic interdependence. The impression from the situation of the fluctuation in the dynamics of international relations, where India's gaining progression with the USA and the shifting priorities of the USA administration are in more detail proved, is that it presumed the knowledge of the worldwide complex interactions of geopolitics and geo-economics in the formation of country's foreign policy.

#### **4.2.2 Pakistan's Ties with Russia: Geo-Economics and Geo-Politics**

In the context of Pakistan's foreign policy, the examination of its relations with Russia using neo-liberalism as a medium led to discover the fact that political and economic factors can cooperate reciprocally in a foreign policy. By means of the implementation of neo-liberalism which advocates for global trade initiatives and market approach, it became possible to fathom the degree of influence economic factors have on the mutual relationship. Thus, this analysis revealed the intricate transformation towards their interrelationships and cooperation in different areas.

Post 2008, the ties between Pakistan and Russia underwent a transformation. In the past, both countries followed the flawed strategy of being on the different sides due to the cold war conundrum (Khan, 2021). Through 2008, their relationship has gone through a renovation courtesy of political and geo-economics factors for weighing in new opportunities of partnerships and engagement (Mahmood et al., 2023). The rise of China into a major power and the subsequent on the South-Asian region also helped shaping this development (Chia & Haiqi, 2021; Rauf, 2019).

In order to become an equally influential nation, Russia has been forced to rethink its geographical perspectives and strengthen its cooperation with Pakistan (Khizar, 2021). Furthermore, when the safety index in the area aggravated with the unrest in Afghanistan and the ensuing rise of radical groups, it intensified the interaction and mutual rapport between the Pakistan and Russia in their pursuit of peace in the region (Kronstadt, 2010; Khan, 2019). Similarly, the retreat of the USA from the Afghanistan has increased the tendency of Russia to shift the gypsy eye to the direction of Islamabad (Bashir & Naseer, 2018).

Moscow's counterstrategy has involved forging fresh diplomatic alliances and developing close contacts with states such as Pakistan; policy of Washington included imposing sanctions and pursuing containment against Russia (Mahmood et al 2023). The neo-liberals hold that the Pakistan-Russia ties that vented after 2008 can be explained by the two states' deepened interdependence and joint activities in diverse fields such as commerce, energy and defense (Chia & Haiqi, 2021). Both countries encouraged their systems to build up on the existing policies of cooperation and mutual benefit, which they

utilize while working to magnify their economic gains and secure their national interests (Keohane & Nye, 1998).

Moreover, economics sector of their relations was developed in direction of increasing their bilateral trade and investment post 2008. There has been progress more on high-level engagements and agreements helped the two states' economic cooperation to proceed (Khan, 2021). A working sphere in the list is energy sector; it is one of the primary fields of dialogue between Russia and Pakistan. To materialize the growing Pakistani gas needs, the two governments have reached agreements on the joint oil and gas exploration, a topic they also have talked about building the gas pipelines and power facilities (Chia & Haiqi, 2021).

The CPEC has prompted Russia to declare a desire to assist Pakistan in building its infrastructure (Khizar, 2021). Despite a modest start, trade between Russia and Pakistan has increased. The neo-liberal emphasis on economic interdependence and cooperation has forced Pakistan and Russia to consider new trade and investment options in the years following 2008. The North-South Gas Pipeline project and the investigation of joint ventures in the energy industry are examples of this cooperation (Reuters, 2022).

Since 2008, the development of relations between Pakistan and Russia has been significantly influenced by geopolitical as well as geo-economic factors. Furthermore, the action has been seen as a sign of Moscow's increased strategic interest in Islamabad as well as Moscow's preparedness to take part in joint military exercises with Pakistan and transfer military equipment (Clary, 2022).

Geopolitical dynamics between Pakistan and Russia have also been significantly influenced by the way that India and Russia's relationship is changing. Since the conclusion

of the Cold War, India and Russia have maintained close ties, but the growing strategic partnership between India and the United States worries Moscow (Panda, 2024). This has prompted Russia to review its foreign policy in South Asia and interact more closely with Pakistan in order to preserve a balance of power in the region (Thoker & Singh, 2017).

According to neo-liberalism in geopolitics, collaboration and cooperation among states could help to resolve common security problems and advance stability (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Due to their shared worries about regional security, notably in Afghanistan and Central Asia, Pakistan and Russia have been working together more and more in fields like defense and counter-terrorism (Clary, 2022).

As a result of numerous geo-economic and geopolitical factors, Pakistani-Russian relations have undergone a significant transformation since 2008. The rise of China, the issue of regional security and the scale of great power fight because of the dynamics of shifting have forced both of the countries to consider and care for their own strategies, so they found a chance to cooperate. The relationships between Russia and Pakistan both as a bilateral and multilateral phenomenon influenced this process.

#### **4.2.3 Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics: China-Pakistan**

Given the analyses of the post-2008 period in world politics, Pakistan's relations with China have gone very deep and have turned to be more economic and strategic in nature in view of both countries' agreed upon interests, and the application of the neo-liberal economic principles. This analysis presented the changing situations between these two countries over the aspects emphasized on geo-economics, geo-politics and the impact their interactions have in their much-improved ties (Faisal, 2018).

The Sino-Pak strategic partnership is characterized by a willingness to put aside differences (though very less) when difficult situations arise and an underlying coordinated desire to uphold regional stability, cooperate on economic cooperation and infrastructural development in the post-2008 era (Khan & Liu, 2019). In compliance with the neoliberal ideas, the two countries have expanded cooperation encouraged by economic interdependence, as many bilateral arrangements and initiatives resulted in facilitation of trade, investment and political co-operation (Gul et al., 2020). Another important thing is that their strategic partnership has greatly contributed in the way of Pakistan defense and strengthened Pakistan's deterrence posture in the region (Faisal, 2018).

It is important to note, though, that the rise in intensity of the CPEC has had a very dramatic effect in the evolution of the foreign policy of Pakistan and the relation with China. The CPEC encourages trade, investment and communication among the two nations, which is meant to establish a favorable base for economic expansion and growth (Adnan & Fatimais, 2020). Through CPEC, Pakistan embraced FDI as well as multi-faceted reform and investment to globalize its commerce and industrial base by focusing on modernizing the infrastructure while furthering regional economic integration via neo-liberalism ideas (Wolf, 2016).

As a result, diplomatic and geo-economic posture have helped the Pakistan's foreign policy to broaden by lessening dependence on the old allies like US (Fazal et al., 2023). Through, CPEC, the gigantic project, western China would be connected to Pakistan's ports on the Arabian Sea, resulting in major economic gains for both nations. In addition to the CPEC, China has invested in Pakistan's infrastructure and energy projects, considerably enhancing the economy of that nation (Gul et al., 2020).

Pakistan's relations with China have been impacted since 2008 by the interplay of geopolitical issues, including the dynamics of regional security, India's engagement, and China's support for Pakistan's diplomatic fronts (Shahzad, 2023). Influence on South Asia and regional security is the focus of China, therefore, China has considerably enhanced the Pakistan defense capacities (Synergia Foundation, 2018).

The duo further strengthened their military and economic cooperation in order to dominate India's growing competition and influence in the process (Farooq et al., 2018). The partnership between China and Pakistan has seen an evolving nature due to the presence of India. Both nations have attributed a considerable meaning to the alliance, interpreting it as a sort of balancing the growing influence of India. The relationship of China and Pakistan in the field of security by their collaborative efforts in counter-terrorism strategies has been critical for regional security issues (Iqbal et al., 2024).

In order to sum up, there has been a remarkable buildup of the inter-relationships between geopolitics and geo-economics, which have ultimately caused the improvement and enhancement of the bilateral relations between Pakistan and China since the year 2008. The examination explained how neo-liberal methods facilitate building economic interactions as well as scrutinizes the importance of common goals in the creation of bilateral links.

Besides, it presented the regional interactions, particularly India's engagement and the consequences that led to the growing relations, because of their nuclear partnership with Pakistan, which has shaped their interactions. From 2008 onwards, there has been a noticeable shift in the geopolitical landscape on the ground of Pakistan-China interactions amongst existing relations. Additionally, China and Pakistan's continued cooperation in

resolving shared security challenges, particularly those involving India, has made sure that their alliance is resilient and adaptive in the face of the rapidly changing international environment.

#### **4.3 Neighborly Relations: Pakistan's Geo-Economics and Geo-Politics After 2008**

Taking into consideration the foreign relations of Pakistan after 2008 with its neighboring countries, with regard to India, Afghanistan and Iran, it analyzed how geopolitics and geo-economics are inter-linked (China already covered in major powers). Economic interdependence, market forces and globalization being the main themes in foreign relations characterize a large part of neoliberalism (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Through this paradigm, the study provided an overview of how geopolitical factors alongside economic considerations such as trade, investment and regional integration have come into play as determinants of Pakistan's relationship with its neighbors. These relationships have that elaborated nuances between political factors and economic realms to complement each other (Amin, 2021).

This part examined the multidimensional and complex character of the relationships of Pakistan with the neighbors. The portion analyzed into the critical fundamentals and influences on Pakistan's foreign relations with its neighborhoods: economics seemed crucial, of course, security dynamics within the region were also worth mentioning, and the role of major powers could not be neglected either (Sattar, 2020).

##### **4.3.1 India-Pakistan: Economic and Political Interplay**

This part examined a briefly Pakistan's relation with India in the post 2008 considering both geo-politics and economics as factors. History between Pakistan and India has been complicated, which is popular with territory-related conflicts, security concerns,

and myriad of geopolitical imperatives (HM, 2023). While since the last few years the geo-economic aspects including trade, investment and regional infrastructure was also a focus, besides geopolitical issues like border disputes, regional security and the interference of big states, driving Pakistan-India relationships (High Commission of India, 2024) but the actual potential of geo-economics has yet not achieved due to mentioned geo-political issues.

. With the help of the idea of neo-liberalism as the main point of focus, the intricacies of this relationship have been viewed and this gave more ideas about the Pakistan-India relationship and its implication for Pakistan's foreign policy (Harvey, 2007). Pakistan and India, the two largest economies in South Asia and in close proximity represent the region with tense ties that are affected greatly by the numerous geo-economic concerns. Many a reverse attempts have been made to enhance economic ties, which played a key role in the regional integration, particularly in trade and investment, since 2008 (High Commission of India, 2024). Due to political unrest, long-standing hostility, and the unsolved Kashmir issue, bilateral commerce between the two nations is still minimal despite the potential for economic interdependence and regional integration (Rashid & Hilali, 2020; Paul, 2005).

Closer economic linkages between the two nations are assessed boost stability and lessen the possibility of war, according to neo-liberal views (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Neo-liberalism's three guiding principles of free trade, investment, and regional collaboration have provided the ability to benefit all parties involved and encourage peaceful coexistence. Economic ties between Pakistan and India have been hampered by

geopolitical tensions and prior conflicts (Sridharan, 2005) but seriously efforts have been observed to overcome the hurdles (Shah, 2024).

Both nations claimed sovereignty over the region, and the territorial dispute over Kashmir continued to be a significant cause of strife. Cross-border issues of security have been analyzed as an example that regional security issues bring about that added to the increased strained relations between the two countries (Ariyawardana, 2022). In spite of this, as the neo-liberalism projects the decline of military role in resolving conflicts under complex interdependence, the same has been witnessed in India Pakistan relations since 2008 (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Pakistan and India relationships with major powers including the US, China, and Russia, have significantly impacted the geopolitical dynamics. The US, for example, with these two countries constantly and simultaneously was engaged while at the same time sought its own agenda in Asia (Thoker & Singh, 2017). China played an increased role and intervention became more complicated because of cooperation of China with Pakistan as they have a much strong strategic alliance as compare to India (Gill, 2019).

As far as major regional organization, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which includes members like Pakistan and India, is concerned, despite its dormant status, remained relevant and the spirit of cooperation remained strong, despite the challenges of Pakistan and India (Chowdhury, 2022). Similarly, the expansion of the SCO has also been examined to positively influence India-Pakistan relations, particularly in counterterrorism and security, as the forum has low negative impressions of India and Pakistan (Nisa, Zahra & Bokhari, 2020). This gives the room for the two nations to converse on the obstacles they face jointly but also in their transcending factors in

aspects such as cooperation, trade, connectivity, and regional security with the help of institutional framework as elaborated by neo-liberalists (Sattar, 2020; Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The underlying principle of neoliberalism is that the regional organizations with the repeated interactions, cooperation and the opportunities enhance dialogue and cooperation among countries (Harvey, 2007). These platforms have given prospects of contributing to the mending of the erosion of the relations between Pakistan and India and helped in producing at some peaceful relationship (Chowdhury, 2022). On the upside, but there are also imminent implications that geopolitical and geo-economics factors play in the region, might collectively act as a hindrance to creating long term peace (Kaura, 2020; Sattar, 2020).

The post-2008 era has witnessed various efforts to enhance geo-economic ties and promote dialogue between Pakistan and India, including through regional organizations and forums. However, the interplay of geopolitical considerations, historical mistrust, and the influence of major powers continue to shape the complex relationship between the two countries. The application of neo-liberalism principles suggests that increased economic interdependence, sustained dialogue, and the active engagement of regional organizations could contribute to a more stable and peaceful relationship. However, the challenges posed by the persistence of geopolitical tensions and the limitations of regional organizations remained significant obstacles to achieving this goal.

#### **4.3.2 Pakistan-Afghanistan: Geo-Economics and Geo-Politics Dynamics**

This part analyzed after-2008 era Pakistan - Afghanistan affairs blending geopolitics with geo-economics with the perspective of neo-liberalism. The relationship

between Pakistan and Afghanistan is brought about by the fact that they are neighbors, have a history and above all common security matters (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). Over past years, the area of the candid relationship has been changing, largely in accordance with the aspects of economy cooperation, trade and regional integration (Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d.-e; Naseer, 2014). This part examined contours regarding trade, transit and regional connectivity as well as the role of major powers that influence Pakistan's relation with Afghanistan, including the peace process in Afghanistan, the cross-border tension, etc (Wani, 2022).

After the 2008 period, Pakistan and Afghanistan have worked more together on improving the geo-economic partnerships, adding more to trade, transit routes and regional integration. The trade agreements meant to promote the bilateral trade and to ease the movement of goods between the two nations (Watandar et al., 2023). In the view of the neoliberal principles for trade and economic interdependence plays vital role in maintaining peace and stability in all nations (Khan & Rahman, 2020). For the instance of Pak-Afghan, the latent trade exchange may be the possible basis of establishing a better and cooperative relation. Although this complicated geopolitical condition prevents complete actualization of these economics in the region, still we are hopeful that the future bring new possibilities (Naseer, 2014).

Besides, the country's integration into the connectivity i.e. CPEC and regional cooperation with Central Asian countries' program acted as lever to enhance cooperation and connectivity between the two countries (Malik & Zhilong, 2018). These projects represented an increase in stability across the region and build a basis for the Afghan-Pakistan economy improving (Khan, et al., 2020).

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations has also been significantly afflicted by a series of geopolitical issues since 2008, especially when it came to peace negotiations, cross-border terrorism, and the inference of main powers. The role of Pakistan in the Afghan peace process cannot be overstated where the support of the government was very essential in convincing the Taliban to start the dialogue (Baqai Wasi, 2021). As far as the decade after 2008 is concerned, cross-border terrorism has been one of the most critical problems both countries have been dealing. Therefore, the two countries were at each other's throat, the 'terrorists' as they alleged were being harbored by the both and to make matters worse, it was being blamed for not doing enough to solve the issues (Akram & Riaz, 2023).

The shared objectives with Afghanistan included peace and development. The implication remained a stable and prosperous Afghanistan that could benefit Pakistan in economic and security realms (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). Hence, Pakistan has taken part in various initiatives aimed at ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan including being an active member of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) that was formed to find a lasting outcome to the Afghan issue and it has backed the peace process (Idrees et al., 2019). Besides it, Pakistan has been concentrating on areas comprising of infrastructures, education and health in Afghanistan to build the lack of necessary utilities. This endeavored of support acts as a strong ground for the progress and reconstruction activity in the country (Khan & Rahman, 2020).

Thus, it expressed the strong efforts and commitment being undertaken by Pakistan for the development of a peaceful and prosperous neighbor (Naseer, 2014; Khan & Rahman, 2020). It presented Pakistan's participation in conflict resolution through stabilization of the region by addressing the core source of all conflicts in Afghanistan. In

spite of this, there were many other geopolitical and geo-economic aspects that had conflicting interests and were hindered to a Pakistan that were incremental consideration and promotion of the stability and development of Afghanistan. The continuous disunity between Pakistan and India, in addition to the conflict among the interest levels of regional and international actors in Afghanistan, were also among the obstacles in the concerted undertaking of peacekeeping, stability, and development endeavors in the region (Wani, 2022).

Post 2008 has witnessed momentous changes that had significant effect on Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, starting with the efforts to further develop economic ties and cope with geopolitical challenges. Neo-liberalist school of thought elucidates about the means through which economic cooperation arising from cooperation and trade facilitated peace and prosperity between the two states (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the region has been greatly adhered to its geopolitical geography complexity, which is limiting the full realization of these opportunities. Hence, into the future, Pakistan needs more dedicated to the endeavor of solidarity and prosperity in Afghanistan region, adding permanent solutions to geopolitical conflicts through complex interdependence (Harvey, 2007).

#### **4.3.3 Interplay: Pakistan-Iran Geo-Economics and Geo-Politics**

This part examined the geo-economics and geopolitical aspects as it shed light on Iran-Pakistan relations in the decenniums after 2008. Due to their close proximity and shared concerns for the stability and security of the region, Pakistan and Iran are valuable to each other in the political and economic areas as well as the cultural area (Awan, M. A. 2018). Within both the geopolitical and geo-economics fields, the bilateral relations

between the two countries has undergone a dynamic transformation. The designs of bimodal relations were implemented through the key geo-economic considerations such as commerce, energy cooperation, and investment (Czulda, 2023).

In terms of the neo-liberal approach, the analysis witnessed economic integration that contributed to the reduction of armed conflicts. One of the most significant geo-economic developments of Pakistan-Iran relationship since 2008 has been the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, which was designed to meet the requirements of Pakistan's long-term energy supply from Iran's (Ali et al., 2022). Having said that, the United States' sanctions on Iran as well as lack of financial resources acted as the biggest hindrances for this project to be implemented, however, that did not change the fact that it has the utmost priority in the scheme of energy security of Pakistan (Ali, 2022).

Trade between Pakistan and Iran has been one of the most vital part that both countries aimed to boost for attaining the maximum level. Nonetheless, the progress have been encouraging although it was challenging, the examples, trade agreements and border market, aimed for increased commerce (Khan & Waseem, 2019).

While as seen post-2008 with regard to geopolitical factors resulted in the positive Pak-Iran relations. The Iranian nuclear program served as a vital matter of fact for the neighboring and the world powers. Pakistan has always delivered fairness while engaging with Iran on the issue of nuclear technology. Pakistan supported Iran's right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes while pressing the Iran to negotiate the nuclear complications (MoFA, n.d). This idea goes about together with the principles of neo-liberalism being diplomatic in all interactions and resolving any international disagreements in a responsible manner (Harvey, 2007).

The phenomenon of major states' interference in Pak-Iran relations is yet another factor, especially, as far as the US and Saudi Arabia are considered. Iran kept worrying about Pakistan's relationship with the US and their membership of the Saudi military alliance against terrorism. However, Pakistani government tried to keep same friendly relationships simultaneously with Saudi Arabia, Iran and the US (Shah & Ismail, 2023). On occasions, such complex geopolitics involved the fact that both Pakistan and Iran had difficulty for independent foreign policy.

A shift in prominence of Iran in the CPEC led to new regional connectivity and commerce, as Jamil and his co-authors (2023) postulate it. Despite diverging opinions in neo-liberalism on the ability of economic interdependence to promote peace and stability, this situation imparts them a unique opportunity for Pakistan and Iran to move their regional economic cooperation forward (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The instabilities in Afghanistan and the region of the Middle East in the same manner had the impact on geopolitical relations of Pakistan and Iran. Both nations have voiced to work together in counter-terrorism efforts and concern about the growth of extremist groups in the region (Shah & Ismail, 2023). Pakistan and Iran had an additional opportunity to cooperate as a result of their shared objective in fostering regional stability.

Along with these regional shifting policies, the dynamic relations between Pakistan and Iran were consistently facing challenges. With the intensified rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia because of the Yemen conflict, in which both countries were brutally engaged, increasing tension of having to pick a side for Pakistan appeared in the region's power struggle (Khan & Sajjad, 2023).

Pakistan is, by and large, a country that played a proactive role in achieving peace in the region, it emphasized a diplomatically acceptable solution to regional issues mostly by the means of cooperation among Muslim nations (Ali& Ahmad, 2021). This envisaged strategy is in a way an embodiment of neo-liberal sentiment, which is more inclined towards peaceful ways of dispute resolutions, say, via diplomacy and multilateralism (Harvey, 2007).

The tangled sync of a geo-economic and geo-political spider web shaped Pakistan-Iran relations since 2008. Decisions taken with regard to geopolitical concerns and the impact of powerful countries occasionally affected the joint ambition of the two countries to further develop their economic ties. The supporters of the neo-liberalism paradigm believe that recurrent diplomatic linkages and stable economies are the key elements to lasting stability and co-operation. The changing regional dynamics provided Pakistan-Iran relations with both opportunities and concerns. Although, since 2008 both countries tried for more of a geo-economic approach.

#### **4.4 Geo-Politics and Economics: Post 2008 - Pakistan's Ties with Muslim World**

This part examined the foreign relations of Pakistan with the Muslim countries post 2008 that specifically involved the countries, namely, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, Qatar, UAE, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Gulf Muslim countries, Central Asian Republics, African Muslim countries and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (Afghanistan and Iran were covered earlier as the neighboring countries). The application of neo-liberalist lens on the entanglement of geo-politics and geo-economics in regulating these relations is charted. Neo-liberalism, focusing on the economy, market factors as well

as globalization when it comes to foreign relations, are dominating concepts in cooperation (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The examination adhered that the economic aspects like commerce, investments and diplomatic cooperation with the Muslim countries have guided Pakistan's foreign policy. Further, it analyzed that geopolitical contours including regional security and institutional arrangements have shaped the relations.

#### **4.4.1 Saudi Arabia-Pakistan: Balancing Geo-Economics and Geo-Politics**

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have historically maintained a strong relationship rooted in mutual economic, political, and strategic interests. Such a relationship benefitted from common religious and cultural roots; moreover, the relations were also underpinned by the mutual common interests in maintaining the influence in international affairs (Consulate of Pakistan in Jeddah, n.d.).

Pakistan's relations with Saudi Arabia have been shaped by both geopolitical and geo-economic factors, with neo-liberalism playing a significant role in shaping the economic dimensions of the relationship and cooperation the post-2008 era (Asseri, 2022). Neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on free-market capitalism, economic liberalization, and globalization, has encouraged Pakistan to pursue deeper economic ties with Saudi Arabia, including trade, investment, and labor relations (Harvey, 2007). The geo-economics component of relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has changed since 2008. Saudi Arabia has been one of Pakistan's top trading partners as the two countries' trade has increased (Ahmed, 2023).

Due to Pakistan's reliance on oil imports, the trade balance remained skewed in favor of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has also grown to be a substantial investor in Pakistan,

especially in the infrastructure and energy industries. Saudi Arabia signed MoU to invest in an oil refinery in Gwadar, and other projects considered (Bhutta, 2023). Investment has also been a crucial component of Pakistan's relations with Saudi Arabia, with market-oriented economic policies and the neo-liberal emphasis on fostering Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inspiring both nations to look for investment possibilities. In line with a larger trend of Gulf nations seeking to diversify their economies in accordance with neo-liberal ideas, Saudi Arabia has made significant investments in Pakistan's infrastructure, energy, and industrial sectors (MoIP, 2024).

In addition to commerce and investment, the geo-economics relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also heavily depended on labor ties. Saudi Arabia remained home to the largest Pakistani expatriate population. These employees' remittances made up a considerable amount of Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, and served as a vital supply of foreign currency and boosting the country's economic stability (Arab News Pakistan, 2023; Rafiq et al., 2022). Labor migration between the two nations marked a reflection of the larger neo-liberal trend of labor market integration around the world (Nye, 1988).

Since 2008, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have worked closely together to address regional security issues, particularly the war against terrorism. Both countries have experienced the effects of terrorism, and they have worked together to address this shared threat through intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism operations, and capacity building (Weinbaum & Khurram, 2014). Additionally, they have synchronized their opinions on regional matters including the state of the Middle East in general and Afghanistan (Asseri, 2022).

The relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has also been impacted by the influence of other states, particularly the US and China. The United States, a Saudi Arabian friend, has frequently exerted pressure on Pakistan to adopt Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, particularly when it comes to Iran (Kumar, 2008). In contrast, Saudi interest has grown as a result of China's expanding presence in the region, particularly through the CPEC, which has expanded economic cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Huang & Sayed, 2022).

Pakistan's geo political relations with Saudi Arabia have faced a strain as a result of the Yemeni conflict. Saudi Arabia asked military assistance from Pakistan. Pakistan, meanwhile, took a neutral approach, stating its desire to support regional peace and stability in line with complex interdependence of neo-liberalism (Keohane & Nye, 2011). The two countries' relations were temporarily strained as a result of this choice, but they subsequently were able to forge a solid strategic alliance (Hashim, 2015).

Pakistan's foreign policy has made maintaining a healthy balance with both Saudi Arabia and Iran a priority. In the Saudi-Iran rivalry, Pakistan has generally adopted a non-alignment strategy, highlighting the value of negotiation and diplomacy in resolving regional conflicts (Ali & Ahmad, 2021). Pakistan has been able to preserve close ties with both nations while avoiding being embroiled in their wars. Pakistan welcomed high-level delegations from both nations, taken part in multilateral forums with Saudi Arabia and Iran (Siddiqa, 2023).

The Pakistan has adopted the same tactic of staying neutral in the proxy wars amongst Saudi Arabia and Iran that happened in Syria and Iraq. The reason why Pakistan has been mainly building a balanced relationship with both countries is not only for its

economic favors but for other geo-political shared interests as well (Khan, & Sajjad, 2023). Iran provided energy resources as well correspondingly upscale economic prospects that are widely possible because of their shared border whereas Saudi Arabia remained an important source of trade, energy, investment and remittances to Pakistan (Khan & Sajjad, 2023). Pakistan keen on maintaining cordial ties with both nations and sought optimum results for its economic growth and energy demands. Moreover, Pakistan possessed the capability of pursuing such state aimed as good relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran that could be beneficial to the participation in regional organizations like the OIC (Zikriya & Ahmad, 2022).

To sum up, the policy shift has signified Pakistan's pursuit of free market capitalism, economic liberalization, cooperation and globalization through deeper economic ties with Saudi Arabia, as economics in this period was highly prioritized (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

#### **4.4.2 Turkey-Pakistan: Aligning Geo-Economics and Geo-Politics**

Pakistan's relations with Turkey have been historically strong and are deeply rooted in shared cultural, religious, and political values (Javed & Baloch, 2023). In the post-2008 era, the bilateral relationship has been shaped by both geopolitical and geo-economic factors, with neo-liberalism playing an essential role in the economic dimensions of the partnership (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

In particular, Pakistan and Turkey's relations have been benefitted by commerce, investment, and defense cooperation to foster closer bilateral relations (Luerdi & Marisa, 2019). This is supported by neo-liberalism, which emphasizes free-market capitalism, economic cooperation and globalization (Harvey, 2007). Both nations have utilized their

comparative advantages and broaden their markets to increase their bilateral commerce. Attempts have been made to construct a free trade agreement between the two states in order to increase trade opportunities, despite some obstacles such trade imbalances and protectionist policies (Ahmad & Naseeb, 2023).

In the years following 2008, investment has become another crucial component of Pakistan's relations with Turkey. The neo-liberal emphasis on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and market-oriented economic policies has pushed both countries to investigate investment opportunities in a variety of areas, including energy, infrastructure, and industry (Mahmood et al., 2023).

With both states having an interest in maintaining regional security and stability, defense cooperation has also been a significant part of Pakistan and Turkey's relationship (Sheikh, 2023). The neoliberal way of the world has stimulated coordination of both countries in the sectors of defense products trade, joint military exercises as well as import of defense technologies (Keohane & Nye, 2011). The military capabilities of Pakistan have improved as a result of this cooperation, which has also strengthened the strategic alliance between the two nations (Ahmad & Naseeb, 2023).

The regional security and the role of the major countries affected Pakistan's ties with Turkey from geopolitical perspective too. Since 2008, Turkey has grown increasingly powerful and influential in the Muslim world, and it strived to exercise its influence on a number of regional and international issues (Ahmad & Naseeb, 2023). One of the major challenges, Kashmir situation and Palestinian issue have been a matter of common interest and understanding between Pakistan and Turkey, serving the common purpose of strategic partnership (Akram et al., 2021). In terms of geopolitics, Pakistan and Turkey had a shared

interest in maintaining regional security and stability, especially in light of common threats like terrorism, extremism, and local disputes (Sheikh, 2023).

In addition to this, the reason of cooperation between Pakistan and Turkey was the desire to reduce dependency on superpowers particularly in the frame of the neoliberal international order. The two countries tried to evade excessive dependency on the major countries and, likewise, there has been an endeavor to increased options for diplomatic policies those were promoted by shared objectives (Akram et al, 2021). The geo-political and geo-economic relation has also been supported by institutional mechanisms of ECO and OIC for enhanced collaborations within framework of neo-liberalism (Mahmood & Siddiquee, 2023). Thus, these nurtured relations served as a model to other Muslim countries to follow the way of closer integration and forming economic relation.

To sum up, neo-liberalism as a paradigm of Pakistan's interaction with Turkey has shown the significance of economic as well as geopolitical factors achieving better ties. Pakistan's economic links with Turkey as well as peace led cooperation in regional security and strategic realms are interplayed with free-market capitalism, economic liberalization and globalization.

#### **4.4.3 Pakistan's Engagement: Geo-Economics, Geo-Politics with Muslim World**

In the post-2008 era, the relations between Pakistan and other Muslim countries and groups including Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Qatar, UAE, Bangladesh, Central Asian Republics (CARs), Africa Muslim countries, and the OIC have been examined by the emanation of geo-economics and geopolitics guided by the neo-liberal approach (Harvey, 2007).

Since 2008, both Pakistan and Egypt have made efforts between each other to boost their commerce (APP, 2021). This foreign policy agenda subscribed mostly to liberal economic policies by investments and commerce in sectors such as agriculture, textiles and pharmaceuticals (Amin, 2024). Moving to geopolitical relations, it was quite evident that the security relations were a first priority by Pakistan and Egypt. Intelligence sharing and collaborative military exercises were the vivid examples of the concrete organizations through which relation of both Egypt and Pakistan in the field of security, have been trying to improve and helped jointly to fight terrorism and extremism (SIS, 2023; APP, 2021).

Post-2008 era witnessed an expansion of trade and investment linkages relating to Pakistan and Muslim countries when Pakistan resorted to a neo-liberal economy policy in order to liberalize economic aspects of free market and promoted globalization (Harvey, 2007). Must say, Pakistan has not only considered ratification of trade agreements particularly with Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia but also tried to achieve increased trade and investment (MoCom, n.d). Pakistan's economic progress has also been aided by investments made in the energy and infrastructure sectors by countries like Qatar and the UAE (Siddiqa, 2021). Likewise, geo-politically these countries played cooperative role in mitigating risks of conflicts particularly with regard to security. Moreover, presence in institutional frameworks like OIC and collaboration further witnessed the neo-liberalist tendencies (OIC, 2022).

Along with other countries with a majority of Muslims, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Pakistan has actively participated in regional integration initiatives like the ECO, the CPEC and others (Wasi, 2023). By lowering trade obstacles and encouraging infrastructure development, these

programs seek to advance regional connectivity, trade, and investment in accordance with neo-liberal economic principles (MoCom, n.d). Geo-politically, these CARs collaborated and cooperation where required in diplomatic domains (Zuridinov, 2022).

Pakistan's relations with other Muslim countries and groups have also been collaborated for geopolitical factors, such as regional security and counter-terrorism initiatives. Pakistan has tried to strengthen with Malaysia and Indonesia, through joint military exercises, defense cooperation agreements, and intelligence sharing forums (Luerdi & Marisa, 2019; Javed & Baloch, 2023). Pakistan has besides rendered very useful support services towards OIC's anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts. For instance, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia-led Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) has achieved great under the government of Pakistan. Likewise, geo- economics also was prominent feature of the states mentioned above (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, 2024).

The South Asian region and the Muslim world can be portrayed as the backdrop against which Pakistan's foreign policy and international interactions in the period after 2008 have to be interpreted, in view of the geoeconomic, geopolitical, and neoliberal ideas that have shaped Pakistani foreign policy (Ahmed & Akbarzadeh, 2023). Pakistan endeavored to strengthen the economic ties with Muslim nations and the other Islamic organizations, to have an access to diverse trading and investment partners, to lessen the extent on which major states, to be integrated with the global economy (Curtis, 2012). This, as pointed out by the neoliberal view of economic revival, economic liberalization, free markets and globalization which Harvey (2007), emphasize.

To get the bottom line, neo-liberalism has been instrumental in scrutiny of Pakistan's relationships with the Muslim countries and institutions, considering it focused on economic liberalism and globalization, as well as on diplomatic cooperation between the states (Harvey, 2007). These relations are the consequences of new dynamics of the foreign policy in the modern globalized world.

#### **4.5 Crux of the Post-2008 Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics of Pakistan**

Since 2008, Pakistan's foreign policy has dynamically engaged with major powers and neighboring countries while fostering relations within the broader Muslim world, intertwining geopolitics and economics in its approach.

Pakistan's relationship with the U.S. has been multifaceted, ranging from security cooperation to diplomatic strains. These interactions have influenced economic ties between the nations, highlighting the intersection of security interests and economic partnerships (Sattar, 2020). Neo-liberalism and complex interdependence underscored the pursuit of mutual economic benefits despite political differences, shaping the depth and scope of the relationship (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been pivotal in solidifying the Sino-Pak relationship, emphasizing economic cooperation through infrastructure development (Shahzad, 2022). Simultaneously, Pakistan's engagement with Russia reflected efforts to diversify strategic partnerships, showcasing a blend of economic opportunities and geopolitical realignments. The evolving dynamics with Russia and the consolidation of ties with China have presented new avenues for economic collaboration amid geopolitical recalibrations.

Despite economic potential, Pakistan's relations with India remained strained, hampering substantial economic collaborations due to geo-political concerns (Wani, 2022). Post-2008, Pakistan's efforts to stabilize Afghanistan aligned with economic interests (Watandar, et al., 2023). Neo-liberalism based relation emphasized economic cooperation for stability while acknowledging security imperatives in the region (Harvey, 2007). Meanwhile, Pakistan's relations with Iran, particularly in trade and energy cooperation, reflected the interplay between economic imperatives and efforts toward regional stability (Ali, 2022). Economic partnerships with Iran have shown potential but are impacted by geopolitical complexities, revealing a delicate balance between economic interests and regional dynamics.

Pakistan's engagements with the broader Muslim world encompassed various nations, each contributing to economic and geopolitical dynamics. Collaborations with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey, and other Muslim-majority nations highlight economic cooperation and the formation of political alliances (Ahmed & Akbarzadeh, 2023). Economic interdependencies have fostered political affinities, echoing neo-liberalism principles of economic cooperation driving political alignments within the Muslim world.

Pakistan's post-2008 foreign policy landscape reflects a multifaceted engagement with major powers, neighboring countries, and the broader Muslim world. The interplay between geopolitics and economics is evident with more focus on geo-economics in the pursuit of economic opportunities amidst geopolitical complexities. Neo-liberalism provided insights into how economic interdependencies shape political alignments, underscoring the intricate relationships Pakistan maintained across various geopolitical spheres.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Impacts of Intended Transition from Geo-Politics to Geo-Economics on the Foreign Policy of Pakistan**

This chapter dealt with evaluating the impact of the intended shift from the geo-political model to the geo-economic one on Pakistan's foreign policy towards major powers, neighbors and Muslim world under the framework of the neo-liberalism.

#### **5.1 Overview**

This study deepened the understanding of the impact conferring from geo-politics to geo-economics has on the foreign policy of Pakistan (GOP, 2022). In this chapter, the examination of the intended transition of geo-politics to geo-economic is carried out. It evaluated the inter-relationship between global politics and economy, and the ways these factors affected the foreign policies of Pakistan and countries (Bhatti & Shahrukh, 2023). It also analyzed the important aspects including the manner in which the ideas evolved and interacted with each other; after which it established both the changes and the contacts that the country has had with some great powers, neighbors and Muslim countries and groups (Amin, 2021).

With its transition from the predominantly security-oriented plan to rather comprehensive measures encompassing the peace building, the role of economic gains, and regional integration, this process is better illuminated on the importance of the prosperity (Prime Minister Office, 2021). Neo-liberal framework is applied to analyze the effect of this tendency of the foreign policy of Pakistan (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The intended move from geo-political to geo-economics in the new strategy of Pakistan indicated a changed outlook and served as an example of the evolving dimension of global relations and the patterns of interdependence in the globalized world and institutions. Although, shift was not just a response to the changing global landscape but also a strategic recalibration of Pakistan's foreign policy priorities (Prime Minister Office, 2021). However, it entailed a sophisticated comprehension of neo-liberalism, a conceptuality that accentuates the economic globalization, free trade and diminishment of the state intervention (Harvey, 2007).

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 11.53 percent in FY 2023-24, from US \$27.875 billion to US \$31.090 billion, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data revealed. Significant contributions came from food, textiles, cement, and sports goods, highlighting the country's resilience and diversification in global markets (Ahmed, 2024a).

Pakistan's agro and food product exports soared to \$8 billion in FY24, marking a 37% growth compared to the previous year. Increases in rice, sesame seeds, and maize exports, along with significant contributions from meat, fruits, and vegetables, particularly onions, drive this growth (Business Recorder, 2024e). Pakistan's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) exports hit a record high of \$2.6 billion in FY24, showing significant growth compared to previous years. This surge reflects the growing demand for software development, IT services, and tech-related exports, contributing to the country's overall economic progress in the digital sector (Dawn, 2024).

Pakistan's remittances grew by 11%, reaching \$30.3 billion in FY24, compared to \$27.3 billion in FY23. The highest inflows were from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with

notable increases from the UK and the US. This increase in remittances provides crucial support for Pakistan's economy amid rising concerns over its dependence on overseas inflows (Iqbal, 2024). Pakistan's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rose by 15%, reaching \$1.728 billion during the first 11 months of FY24.

The rise in Pakistan's liquid foreign reserves to \$15.97 billion (almost 40%) in November 2024 (which was around \$10 Bn in Jan 23), reflected positive inflows primarily due to foreign financial assistance and other external sources contributing to the boost in reserve levels, enhancing the country's ability to manage economic stability and meet external obligations (Pakistan Today, 2024e).

In October 2024, Pakistan reported a current account surplus of \$349 million, showcasing a significant improvement from the deficit of \$287 million in the October 2024. This positive shift highlights the country's efforts in improving its external balance, likely driven by a reduction in imports and an increase in remittances and exports (Business Recorder, 2024g).

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) reached a new high as the KSE-100 index crossed 95,000 points in November 2024, driven by strong investor confidence. The market's performance was bolstered by improved economic indicators and foreign investments, despite some selling pressure that appeared later in the day. (Pak Observer, 2024). The PSX was highlighted as the top-performing global market in 2024, according to a Bloomberg report. It noted a 30% rise in the KSE-100 Index, driven by robust foreign investment and positive economic fundamentals, with significant contributions from sectors like fertilizers and energy (News Desk, 2024).

Geo-political factors and foreign policy in Pakistan have been mainly synchronized around the national security, the goals of the ideology and region stability power (Sattar, 2020). The conventional course of events, characterized by a strong dependence on military alliances and military-to-military contacts, has been a major determinant of Pakistan's international policy. Yet, the term 'geo-economics' that has lately become a huge factor in shaping the world politics necessitated a rethinking of contributions that geography has to make in determining the course of international relations of Pakistan (GOP, 2022).

Although geo-economics has had an impact on the geo-political realm of Pakistan, especially with the major powers namely the United States, Russia, and China; the relevance of geopolitics still resided. It highlighted the increasing importance of economic corridors, infrastructure development, and trade in determining strategic relations (Fazal, et al., 2023). This shift is apparent in the Pakistan's bilateral relations with these countries that are giving to each other the economic partnerships which influence diplomatic engagement and decide the strategic issues (Small, 2015).

The regional paradigm shift in the political configuration also contributed to the transformations. The changing dynamics in South Asia region and the neighboring regions has compelled Pakistan to shift from Pro-West foreign policy to Eastern and Regional diplomacy (Wolf 2018). A variety of soft power instruments constituted for the soft power strategies that were woven into Pakistan's foreign policy. These include development assistance, multilateral agreements, and cultural promotion, contributing positively to the country's global image and bilateral relations (Saifullah et al, 2023). This integration meant a balanced approach in the foreign policy combined with economic, cultural, and strategic facets.

With respect to the shift in foreign policy practiced in Pakistan, the study observed the use of neo-liberal approach that features free-market policies, foreign direct investment and economic cooperation as priority in relations. This change of focus mirrored the shift from purely power-oriented traditional politics to a multilateral approach that prioritized economic interests.

## **5.2 Economic Realignment and Foreign Policy Adaptation**

Besides the objective to re-orientate Pakistan's foreign policy shift from a geopolitical to geo-economical, it necessitated some serious economic realignments.

### **5.2.1 Assessing the Economic Realignments in Foreign Policy Post-Transition**

While the post-transition has seen Pakistan redefining its foreign policy orientation towards east/regional approach rather than west oriented, which was predominant previously. The trend has seen as becoming closer to neighboring and other regional countries, to achieve economic interests and regional integration as regional economies grow (Zaidi & Nirmal, 2022).

In the same vein, Pakistan embraced the multifaceted regime of diversification and opened state to the world economy. Pakistan rejuvenated its relationships with traditional allies such as China and Saudi Arabia. This was also visible in its Iran focus, to achieve complex interdependence by reorienting its foreign policy and reduced the dependency on the Western powers (Curtis, 2012). These initiatives signified Pakistan's diplomatic tactic to have a more balanced foreign policy aimed at expanding its strategic interests as much as it can through economic partnerships (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The CPEC played a centerpiece in foreign policy of Pakistan and has demonstrated its economic orientation. The project is the Chinese initiative aligns with neo-liberal

ideology that provided for the establishment of infrastructure and the better possibility of trade (Harvey, 2007). This is in line with the modern liberalism. Though the main emphasis is on economics, it also has an indirect impact on regional security dynamics, showing the interrelationship between social, economic and political contours when making foreign policy choices (Faisal, 2018).

Pakistan's post-transition foreign policy reflected its response to the changing international structure. The trend towards the western bloc in the past was prioritized by more of political and security realms rather than economic (Sattar, 2020). The post transition realignment demonstrates a neo-liberal approach to protect national interests through more economic engagements and native (eastern/regional) strategic alliances (Fozia, Yousaf, & Ashraf, 2019).

Economic realignments in the post-transition phase included comprehensive packages to boost private investment. Practically speaking, policies that were intended to improve production costs and increase demands those were aimed at making investor community more trustworthy and stimulating economic growth (Hyder & Ahmed, 2004).

The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was likewise a good example; the body is tasked with the responsibility of attracting foreign investments to generate economic growth. SIFC is established at country-level with participation from all Provincial Chief Ministers and the Army Chief. The main objective of SIFC is to create opportunities for FDI and investment in various sectors such as agriculture, IT, minerals, etc. Formation of this entity overcomes government deports, and difficulties in investor relation which may lead to a sunnier collaboration with the involved nations (SIFC, 2024).

Pakistan's foreign direct investment (FDI) rose by 15%, reaching \$1.728 billion during the first 11 months of FY24. This growth was driven by higher inflows in May, with \$271 million compared to \$141 million in the same month last year. The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was established to further attract investments in key sectors like defense, agriculture, mining, and IT (Dawn, 2024b).

Pakistan's Federal Minister for Planning, Ahsan Iqbal, announced that four countries, including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Azerbaijan, have committed \$27 billion in investments in Pakistan under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). These investments aim to launch mega projects to stimulate Pakistan's economy and reduce its reliance on loans (Hasnain, 2024). Pakistan has established four new Special Technology Zones (STZs) to enhance tech exports by \$350 million annually. These zones, part of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), aim to attract local and foreign investment while creating 50,000 jobs, offering tax incentives and fostering the tech industry (Business Recorder, 2024a).

Pakistan's eCommerce Council was in process developing a five-year roadmap to promote digital trade and enhance market competitiveness. This plan focuses on digital payments, market access, and support for small businesses. The council aims to present the policy to the government before the next budget to accelerate growth in e-commerce and exports (Khan, 2024b).

Moreover, in 2024, Prime Minister of Pakistan announced the privatization of all government-owned enterprises, except for strategically important ones and emphasized that the government's role is to create a business-friendly environment, not to run businesses (Radio Pakistan, 2024). The Privatization Program 2024-2029 includes the

privatization of loss-making enterprises and power distribution companies, with pre-qualification for PIA privatization by inviting entities (including international) to bid in line with the prepositions of neo-liberalism (Harvey, 2007).

Pakistan has unveiled an ambitious plan to privatize 10 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the current fiscal year, focusing on sectors like aviation, banking, and power. The process aims to reduce government involvement in commercial enterprises and drive economic growth, with entities like Pakistan International Airlines and several power companies among those targeted for privatization (Khan, 2024).

Pakistan has launched a digital visa system for citizens from 126 countries, enabling swift online visa issuance for business and tourism. The initiative aims to simplify travel processes, boost tourism, and attract foreign investment, with visas issued within 24 hours and e-gates planned for airports in major cities (Khattak, 2024).

The IMF and other financial institutions also played a pivotal role in for geo-economic re-alignment of Pakistan by promoting policies that emphasized market liberalization, deregulation, and reduction in government spending (Uddin, 2022). Such policies were often a condition for financial assistance and influencing the economic governance toward a neoliberal framework. This aligned with the IMF's historical approach of prescribing structural adjustments and fiscal austerity measures to achieve economic stabilization (Clift & Tomlinson, 2012).

After the intended transition, Pakistan's foreign policy exhibited a complex interdependence with major powers. The changing relations with the United States, China, and the Russian are, in fact, an indication of shrewd navigation through changing global

power dynamics. This balancing act mirrored on leveraging co-operative and economic relationships to navigate the multipolar world (Lalwani, 2020).

Pakistan's economic realignment process in the post-transitional was seen to be a policy change to integrate in global geo-economics to the creation of economic blocks and regional collaboration. These reforms, anchored on neo-liberalism, were largely entailed via wide spectrum of undertakings such as regional partnerships, investor-friendly economic policies, cooperative policies and political reforms. The transition showed the Pakistan's endeavor to both meet the security concerns of the traditional period by putting forward economic imperatives aimed at mitigating complex interdependence of the world that is both growing and changing at the same time.

### **5.2.2 Impact on Foreign Policy Strategies Due to Economic Prioritization**

The economic prioritization in Pakistan's foreign policy is evident in its alignment with national economic goals (GoP, 2022). This included policies geared towards enhancing exports, improving the balance of payments, and stabilizing the national economy (SIFC, 2024). Such alignment underscores the neo-liberal idea of economic objectives being central to national policy-making (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The transition towards economic prioritization has been marked by policy changes aimed at stimulating private investment. Economic policies such as devaluation and high real interest rates, while intended to boost economic performance, have had mixed impacts on investor confidence (Hyder & Ahmed, 2004). This reflects emphasis on creating a conducive environment for private investment as a cornerstone of economic growth (Harvey, 2007).

Embracing neo-liberal principles, Pakistan has actively sought participation in multilateral trade agreements. These agreements aimed to reduce trade barriers and opened new markets for commerce products (particularly along borders) demonstrating a pivot towards leveraging economic opportunities for prospective gains (MoCom, n.d). For example, government has decided to establish 18 markets along Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran borders with a view to boosting trade with the bordered countries (Dawn, 2020).

Alongside economic measures, Pakistan has increasingly utilized soft power and cultural diplomacy as strategic tools in its foreign policy to consistently boost Pakistani culture, traditions and ideas among international entities and invoked a supportive global setting for economic collaboration (Saifullah et al., 2023). This policy was aligned with neo-liberal concepts of non-coercive power and the importance of cultural and ideological influence in global politics (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Moreover, need for domestic economic security also resulted in shifting from geopolitics to geo-economics. Pakistan has set the new economic security paradigm on three essential pillars: peace, development partnerships, and connectivity (Dawn, 2021). In 2021, at the first held Islamabad Security Dialogue (ISD), Former Army Chief General Bajwa stated:

*‘The contemporary concept of national security... is not solely a function of armed forces anymore. National security in the age of globalization, information and connectivity has now become an all-encompassing notion; wherein, besides various elements of national power, global and regional environments also play a profound role.’*

(Choi, 2021, para. 4)

Pakistan's foreign policy has also been shifted because of continuous received aid and economic assistance. Such aid has remained the annoying need of the Pakistan's economy (Shahzad, 2023), therefore, an intended shift from this aid working more towards sustainable economy led to the idea of independent and self-sufficient foreign policy, following the balancing of economic gains with sustainable growth. This resulted in the raising of alternative options in geo-economics along IMF (Business Standard, 2019).

The long-term impact of foreign capital flows, including debt service and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), has been a critical factor in shaping Pakistan's economic growth. These flows have been influenced by factors like inflation and literacy rates, posing challenges to Pakistan's economic strategies (Ali, 2014). Neo-liberal strategies of accommodating the country into the global market were understood complex interdependence of the factors involved entailing FDI boosting policies and bodies supporting shift for Pakistan's foreign policy (SIFC, 2024) especially with respect to the balance between the economic gains of the country and the economic sustainability.

The decision of liberalization policies on economy although provided great benefits but has also brought about disparate, uneven economic growth and the situation has made social divisions (income inequalities, etc). A majority of the population has been deprived of participation in the major portion of the economy (Khan, 2000). Therefore, along with benefits the analyses also shed light on the contexts of developing countries those entailed challenges where the benefits of neo-liberalization need to be balanced against societal and political stability.

### **5.3 Impact on Relations with Major Powers (USA, Russia, China)**

The influence of geo-economic factors on foreign policy has been recognized and examined of their implications for Pakistan's international relations. This part, therefore, aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the impact of the interplay and transition from geo-politics to geo-economics on Pakistan's foreign policy with major global powers such as the United States, Russia and China (GoP, 2022; Choi, 2021). By investigating how economic considerations were shaping the state's ties with these major powers, it portrayed that how Pakistan strategically positioned itself in the changing landscape for its national interests within neo-liberal framework (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Over time, the economic component of US-Pakistan relations has taken on increased importance. Former Foreign Minister of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi in 2021 said that Pakistan wanted a relationship with the US that was in line with the changed priorities of the former from "geopolitics to geo-economics" (Dawn, 2021). The geo-economic considerations have had an impact on the historically considerable foreign assistance provided by the United States to Pakistan. Geopolitical and geo-economics problems are intertwined, as evidenced by how frequently U.S. economic support to Pakistan has been tied to that country's efforts to fight terrorism (Gallagher, 2021).

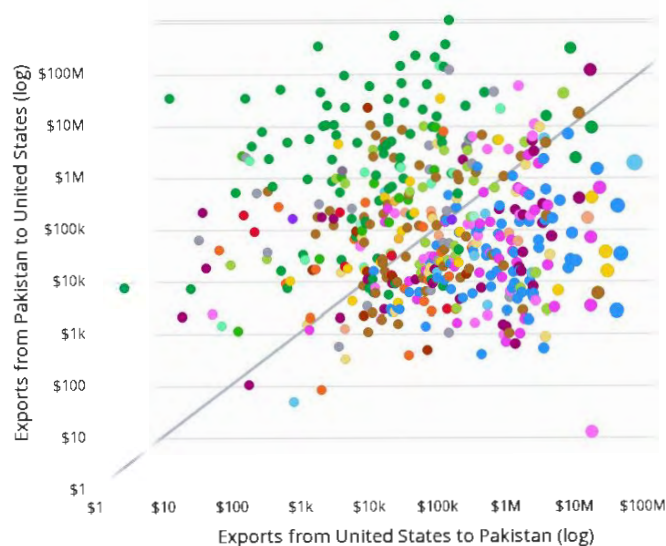
Likewise, in 2021, former Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi met with Pakistani-American entrepreneurs in New York to promote foreign investment in Pakistan. Top officials like former National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf and former Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa have been advocating for a shift in U.S.-Pakistan relations from geostrategy to geoeconomics (Tariq, 2021).

The US has worked to improve its economic ties with Pakistan, prioritizing commerce and investment over aid. In 2021, United States exported \$3.51B to Pakistan. The main products that United States exported to Pakistan are Raw Cotton (\$676M), Vaccines, blood, antisera, toxins and cultures (\$400M), and Scrap Iron (\$385M). During last decades, the exports of United States to Pakistan have increased at an annualized rate of 5.29%, from \$918M in 1995 to \$3.51B in 2021. Whereas, in 2021, Pakistan exported \$5.51B to United States (Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d.-b).

The main products that Pakistan exported to United States were House Linens (\$1.13B), Knit Sweaters (\$565M), and Non-Knit Men's Suits (\$382M). During the decades, the exports of Pakistan to United States have increased at an annualized rate of 5.85%, from \$1.26B in 1995 to \$5.51B in 2021 (Ibid). This change in direction is attributable to geo-economics, which sees economic interconnection and collaboration as instruments to promote improved bilateral relations and mutual understanding (Gallagher, 2021). Graph 5.1 shows the comparative advantage of United States and Pakistan in 2021:

### Graph 5.1 Comparative Advantage United States – Pakistan

(Source: Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d.-b)



This chart compares trade between United States and Pakistan by product, considering products traded by both, United States and Pakistan. The US remained Pakistan's biggest export destination in FY23 (Khan, 2024a).

Moreover, strong people-to-people ties and educational connections persisted between Pakistan and the USA. The Pakistani diaspora and Americans of Pakistani descent significantly enhance bilateral relations. As of 2021, there were 629,946 residents of Pakistani origin in the United States. Additionally, about 10,164 Pakistani students the enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions (MoFA, 2024a).

Furthermore, the relations between the US and Pakistan show how important international groups are under neo-liberalism. For instance, Pakistan's international and economic policies were impacted by American influence in organizations like the IMF (Hussain, 2023). In 2023, US Senator Chris Van Hollen stated that the United States was "very instrumental" in securing recent economic assistance for Pakistan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and would keep supporting Islamabad's endeavors to stabilize its economy (Dawn, 2023). These organizations regularly linked Pakistan's financial aid to calls for economic reforms, which intended to improve the alignment of political and economic factors (Shah & Khan, 2023).

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship has been shifting towards geo-economics, emphasizing economic factors in international relations under a neo-liberal framework (Keohane & Nye, 2011). This shift is evident in initiatives like the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council and the Green Alliance Framework, focusing on economic cooperation, climate change, and mutual growth. This approach aligns with neo-liberal

values of open markets and private sector engagement, marking a strategic pivot for stability and development (Dunn, 2023).

Although, geo-economics was priority of Pakistan's foreign policy but geo-politics also went along in this bilateral relationship with emphasis on geo-political cum security issues (Anis, 2023). The neo-liberal approach comprehended this complex interdependence as a result of the shift towards geo-economics and the growing prominence of economic values in international relations between the United States and Pakistan (Salik, 2023; Harvey, 2007).

The orientation of the relations of Pakistan and Russia, from geopolitical to geo-economic considerations, has been profoundly influenced post 2008 following worldwide tendencies towards regional economic integration and interdependence (Nurmat, Ergashevich, & Mukhamadiev, 2019). A clear shift in the bilateral relations between the two nations has been seen towards geo-economics, with a renewed focus on trade and investment (Khan, 2021). Although the volume of trade between the two countries was yet less, but there was a growing understanding on both sides of the need to look into opportunities for economic cooperation, particularly in the fields of energy, agriculture, and defense (Ullah et al., 2023). The core of the neo-liberal approach is encapsulated by this emphasis on economic interdependence and collaboration (Harvey, 2007).

In 2021, Russia and Pakistan signed a shareholders' agreement for the construction of a US\$2.5 billion natural gas pipeline in Pakistan. This project is part of a broader Russian investment package, valued at US\$14 billion, pledged in 2019 to boost Pakistan's energy sector (Chia & Haiqi, 2021a). Over the past decade, both nations have shown strong political will and have initiated efforts to enhance trade cooperation. Pakistan's drive for

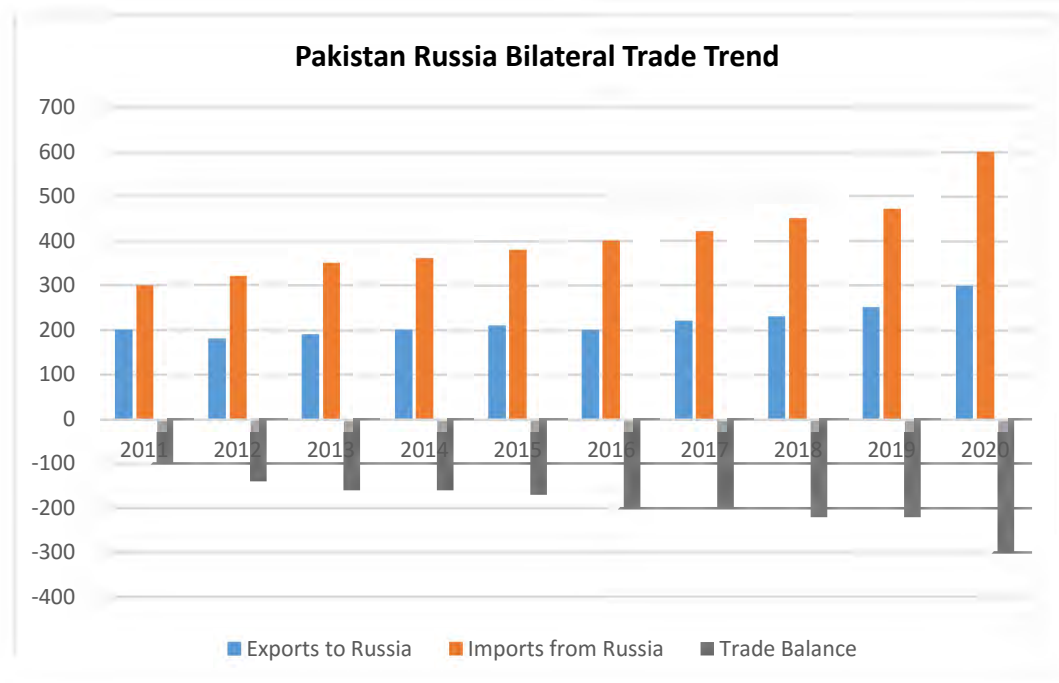
economic recovery and energy supplies, coupled with Russia's ambition to expand its economic presence in Asia, have brought the two countries closer together (Khan, 2021). Following the 2020 Russia-Pakistan Technical Committee meeting, discussions on the North-South Gas Pipeline Project were revived. Originally agreed upon in 2015, the project was delayed due to Western sanctions on Russian stakeholder Rostec. Then, renamed the PakStream Gas Pipeline Project (PSGP), efforts remained underway to move forward. (Chia & Haiqi, 2021a).

Russia's involvement in the Pipeline Project, a major energy project in Pakistan, is a key element in this shift towards geo-economy. The crude oil purchased from Russia by private sector of Pakistan along with public sector purchases is also a case in point (Shahid, 2023) and in line with the fundamentals of neo-liberal ideas.

In 2021, Russia exported \$498M to Pakistan. The main products that Russia exported to Pakistan are Wheat (\$185M), Dried Legumes (\$111M), and Hot-Rolled Iron (\$44.8M). During last decades, the exports of Russia to Pakistan have increased at an annualized rate of 8.32%, from \$67.6M in 1996 to \$498M in 2021. Similarly, in 2021, Pakistan exported \$323M to Russia. The main products that Pakistan exported to Russia were Citrus (\$47.4M), Leather Apparel (\$30.2M), and Non-Knit Women's Suits (\$29.4M). During the last decades, the exports of Pakistan to Russia have increased at an annualized rate of 13.7%, from \$13.1M in 1996 to \$323M in 2021. In 2020, Russia exported services to Pakistan worth \$4.83M, with Transportation (\$2.17M), Communications services (\$1.52M), and Computer and information services (\$535k) being the largest in terms of value (Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d.-d). However, trade balance favored Russia as depicted in the following Graph 5.2:

### Graph 5.2: Bilateral Trade Trend of Pakistan - Russia

(Source: Pakistan Business Council, 2022)



As the above reflects, though Pakistan’s total trade with Russia increased by 108 percent during 2011- 2020, yet its exports decreased by 24 percent whereas its imports increased by 270 percent in the said period (Pakistan Business Council, 2022).

Noticeably, Pakistan observed the highest trade deficit of around 469 million US\$ in 2020. Trade deficit persisted in the following years, too. In the fiscal year 2022-23, “the total trade between Pakistan and Russia amounted to \$920 million. Pakistan’s exports to Russia during this period totaled \$74 million, while imports from Russia reached \$846 million” (Kundi, 2023). In the fiscal year 2023-24, the total trade between Pakistan and Russia amounted to \$1 billion (Syed, 2024). In November 2024, the Consul General of Russian Federation in Pakistan Andrey V Fedorov said that the relations between Russia and Pakistan were developing rapidly and there was a trade volume of over \$ 2 billion between the two countries (Business Recorder, 2024f). This rapidly growth in economic

relations are the impact of geo-economic orientation. Although, given economic non-performance for years, Pakistan faced trade deficit with all major economies, also Russia. Importantly, being energy-deficient and capital-dependent, successive Pakistani governments have pursued sustained economic ties with Russia with the underlying aim to accrue energy resources at affordable price and other products (Niňajová, 2023).

Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered enhanced energy supplies, including crude oil, to Pakistan, during a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit. The discussions also covered the possibility of expanding trade through a barter system, aiming to strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in the energy and agriculture sectors (Yousaf, 2024).

Russia has expressed interest in setting up a new steel mill in Karachi, partnering with Pakistan. The plan involves utilizing 700 acres from the defunct Pakistan Steel Mills, with the goal of boosting local steel production and reducing reliance on imports (Ahmed, 2024). Pakistan and Russia explored new avenues for cooperation, particularly in trade, energy, and regional connectivity. Discussions during Russian Deputy PM Alexei Overchuk's visit included energy purchases, potential free trade agreements, and enhanced defense collaboration. Both nations emphasized deepening bilateral ties through ongoing projects and future initiatives (Syed, 2024).

Pakistan and Russia are intensifying their bilateral relations with a focus on trade, economic cooperation and connectivity alongside discussions on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). This was emphasized during high-level talks in September 2024 between the two countries in which Russian side was led by

visiting Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk and Pakistani side by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar (Hussain, 2024).

Pakistan has begun delivering fruit to Russia via land for the first time, marking a significant milestone in its regional trade efforts. Sixteen trucks carrying oranges entered Russian cities, underscoring the growing bilateral trade between the two nations. This initiative aims to boost Pakistan's exports and strengthen its economy (Arab News, 2024).

This also highlights the relevance of non-state actors (in this case, energy companies) in international relations and the growing influence of economic factors in determining Pakistan's foreign policy towards Russia, which is a core tenet of neo-liberalism (Shahid, 2023). This shift is partly influenced by Russia's changing policy towards South Asia, moving from an India-centric approach to balancing power equations with the USA by cooperating with China and Pakistan. The emerging trilateral engagement among Russia, China, and Pakistan demonstrates a strategic realignment influenced by neo-liberal principles of balancing global powers and fostering regional cooperation (Khizar, 2021).

The significance of regional economic integration in this shift should not be overlooked either. Pakistan and Russia are both members of the SCO, which offers a forum for business collaboration and common interests (Rauf, 2019). The SCO shows the neoliberal features which are framed as interdependence, the need behavioral cooperativeness and the institutions in play-making the global policy (Harvey, 2007). Yet, the geopolitical-geo-economic relation is apparent. Russian intention in the South Asia particularly Afghanistan after United States' withdrawal brought Russia-Pakistan ties to a new level. On the other hand, Russia deemed Pakistan among its list of countries with good

relations, which provided the stability required. They regarded it as an emerging market for Russian commodities and also services (Bashir & Naseer, 2018 ).

The Pakistani government's foreign policy towards China is the most obvious example of the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics (Fazal et al., 2023). The China-Pakistan relationship has been one of the consistent and cooperative in which common geopolitical goals have been shared. Nevertheless, geometry of international relations has transitioned gradually to its new phase, giving a vast room to geo-economics (GoP, 2022).

By far the most striking embodiment of this particular strategy is the Belt and Road Initiative of China and its \$62 billion devoted to build the CPEC. CPEC aimed to link Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan with northwest China through a number of infrastructure and development projects (Wolf, 2018). The CPEC significantly altered the dynamics of Sino-Pakistan relations from a neo-liberal perspective by making the concepts of economic interdependence and collaboration a reality (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The CPEC project, which has significant geopolitical consequences in addition to its economic ones, served as the best example of the complex link between geo-politics and geo-economics (Gill, 2019). By giving China direct access to the Arabian Sea and avoiding potential chokepoints in Southeast Asia, Pakistan increases its geopolitical relevance. For both security and economic reasons, China's direct access to the Arabian Sea is of crucial geopolitical significance (Wolf, 2020).

After CPEC I, Pakistan has planned to share a comprehensive list of over seventy projects across various sectors with the Chinese Prime Minister to further deepen cooperation under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The projects focus on infrastructure, energy, industrial cooperation, and technological innovation, aiming to enhance bilateral ties and economic development (Ghumman, 2024).

The expanding commercial ties between China and Pakistan illustrate the importance of non-state players in global politics. The part that international organizations played in Sino-Pakistani relations is particularly significant from a neo-liberal standpoint. Through organizations like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), China has been supporting Pakistan financially. This assistance reflected China's financial commitment to Pakistan as well as its desire to strengthen its political influence (Mishra, 2016). Pakistan's exports to China for FY 2023-24 reached \$2.56 billion, with a notable increase of 7.34% in June alone. The growth is part of Pakistan's strategic efforts to expand its share in the Chinese market, contributing to the nation's overall exports of \$30.65 billion (Pakistan Today, 2024b).

Pakistan's exports to China saw a significant increase of 33.67% during the fiscal year 2023-24, reaching \$2.707 billion, driven by robust demand for Pakistani goods. Despite some month-to-month fluctuations, the overall trend reflected strong economic ties between the two countries (Daily Times, 2024). For FY 2023, the total trade volume between Pakistan and China, considering both imports and exports, was \$11.687 billion. For FY 2024, this consists of exports amounting to \$2.025 billion and imports totaling \$9.662 billion. The total trade volume between Pakistan and China for the fiscal year 2024 stood \$16.213 billion. The total trade volume between Pakistan and China increased by approximately 38.73% from FY 2023 to FY 2024 (ibid).

The Chinese company Metallurgical Corporation of China (MCC) was eager to boost investment in Pakistan's mineral and mining sector. During a meeting with Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif in May 2024, MCC detailed plans for a mineral park and further investment. The Prime Minister welcomed this, emphasizing China's role in Pakistan's development and directed relevant ministers and officials to facilitate MCC's projects, particularly in Baluchistan, aligning with CPEC Phase 2 priorities (Abbasi, 2024). Two Chinese companies, Rainbow Industries Ltd. and Shaoxing Chemical Industry, have agreed to establish textile plants in Pakistan under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) initiative. This investment aims to boost the production of affordable raw materials for Pakistan's textile sector, supported by a 10-year duty-free machinery import scheme (Express Tribune, 2024).

Pakistan and China have signed a \$382 million agricultural cooperation deal at the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS). This partnership focuses on improving agricultural trade and collaboration, strengthening economic ties between the two nations. The production of JF-17 fighter jets jointly by China and Pakistan is another area of collaboration (Pakistan Today, 2024). China and Pakistan collaborated to create the JF-17, a lightweight, single-engine, multirole combat aircraft, in the early 2000s. To produce and export the JF-17 to countries like Nigeria and Myanmar, the two countries have continued their partnership (Brimelow, 2022).

Pakistan has received from China a substantial number of guns and other military equipment. China is said to have given Pakistan two Type 054A/P frigates, two of the most technologically advanced vessels in the area (Liu, 2021). In addition, China has been supplying Pakistan with other weaponry like the VT4 main battle tank and the CH-4 drone (Inter-Services Public Relations, 2020). Pakistan's Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa remarked in a speech in March 2021 that China's emergence as a major world power

is a reality and that Pakistan views China as a “time-tested friend and a strategic partner” (Inter-Services Public Relations, 2022).

The two countries' relations have undergone a paradigm shift because of China's geo-economics strategy towards Pakistan. With a focus on shared economic growth and development and an awareness of the geopolitical issues that have historically distinguished their connection, highlighted the importance of economic interdependence. The dynamic relationship between geopolitics and geo-economics provides additional support for the importance of using a neo-liberal paradigm to comprehend how Pakistan's foreign policy towards important states like China is evolving.

To illustrate the strategic transformation of Pakistan as it finds ways to adjust to the newly emerging international and regional intricacies, one simply needs to observe the country's shift towards large powers - the USA, Russia, and China. The influence of neo-liberal thinking has reshaped Pakistan's foreign policy with these mega global players from their former alliances based on pure geopolitics to more inclusive and economically oriented partnerships with more financial investment.

#### **5.4 Dynamics with Neighboring Countries (India, Afghanistan, Iran)**

The construction of the relationships with the neighboring countries remained an important element of foreign policy in case of Pakistan. The interplay and transition between geo-politics and geo-economics plays a pivotal role in defining Pakistan's relations with its immediate neighbors (GoP, 2022). This part examined the effects that the shift in policy had on the Pakistan's foreign policy with regards India, Afghanistan and Iran (China is covered in the previous section). It analyzed the dynamics with the lens of neo-

liberalism, from geopolitics to geo-economics; and signified the contour of Pakistan's bilateral engagements with the neighborhood.

A more sophisticated view of Pakistan-India dynamics from a neo-liberal perspective has been possible with regards about complex interdependence as a result of the shift towards geo-economics (Paul, 2018). Neo-liberalism is characterized by the important role that non-state entities including multinational businesses, financial institutions, and NGOs play in determining foreign policy. For instance, the informal trade between Pakistan and India was estimated at around \$4.71 billion in 2012-2013 that has increased, indicating substantial untapped potential (Taneja & Bimal, 2017). According to a 2018 World Bank report, India-Pakistan trade has the potential to increase from USD \$2 billion to USD \$37 billion if both countries were willing to take steps towards removing tariff and non-tariff barriers such as sensitive lists, strict visa policies, strict quality standards and lengthy procedures and waiting periods at the border (Malik, 2020). Despite tensions, the formal bilateral trade between India and Pakistan has increased to USD 1.35 billion during April-December 2022 as against USD 516.36 million in the whole 2021-22 (PTI, 2023).

Despite tense relations, Pakistan has imported goods worth \$1.62 billion from India over the past five years. These imports mainly consist of pharmaceutical raw materials essential for manufacturing life-saving medicines. However, Pakistan has not exported goods to India during this period due to the political standoff following the revocation of Kashmir's special status by India in 2019 (Pakistan Today, 2024a).

. This economic interdependency, as per neo-liberalism, was considered for reducing political tensions (Keohane & Nye, 2011). As witnessed in March 2024, Foreign

Minister Ishaq Dar expressed intentions to reconsider trade relations with India, suspended since India's controversial move to revoke the special autonomous status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in August 2019 (The Express Tribune, 2024). The expanding involvement of commerce and investment between the two countries is a key evidence of this notion.

Although political disputes persisted, economic activities were continued, particularly with the efforts of non-state actors' economic domain (Keohane & Nye, 2011). The unofficial trade routes remained unchanged despite the government's declaration of the closure of official trade routes following political turmoils. For example, countries like Singapore and the UAE have been utilized as transshipment hubs during the times when direct trade was not possible due to poor relations (Malik, 2020).

Moreover, occasions existed where Pakistan and India's private investments established co-operative partnerships in other countries. Take away for example; the firms of India and Pakistan served each together in the textiles and garment industry in the state of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, thus disclosing the fact that common economic interests could conquer the political boundaries (Taneja, Bhadram, and Chakraborty, 2017). IT sector remained a perfect example as well. The good institutional IT framework in both the countries provided the stimulus to cooperate on various fronts. Geo-economics helped suffice geopolitics discords, Indian software solutions and Pakistani software development found beneficial synergistic connections (Globaldev, 2019).

As the role of international institutions is concerned, both mutually beneficial bilateral relations and geo-economics are the mirror (Harvey, 2007). For example, the World Bank's involvement in the Indus Water Treaty was a prime example of how such

organizations could assist in the geo-economics management of geopolitical problems. The World Bank organized the deal that has been of utmost importance in putting water usage in control of the two states indirectly surmounting the geopolitical challenges with economic factors (Ul-Durar et. al., 2023).

Also, as the style of the world economy has been shifting relatively, both nations were seen to cooperate in areas like trade facilitation, border infrastructures, and recognition of standards as they combine their economies towards the global market connections (World Trade Organization, n.d.). Developing intra-regional trade agreements, like that of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), denoted a substantial appearance of geo-economics in regional states' shifting foreign policies. The idea that shared interests could create a platform for communication and collaboration, was depicted by SAFTA, tried to strengthen economic cooperation and integration among the South Asian member states, especially India and Pakistan (Asian Development Bank, n.d.).

The volume of the confidence-boosting initiatives were designed and directed towards the promotion of the foreign commerce and investment was one of the ways to know about the gradual geo-economic shift. A significant instance was Pakistan's decision to offer India "Most Favored Nation" status in 2012, which was intended to foster bilateral trade (Hussain et al., 2017). In 2023, Pakistan has released and repatriated 486 Indian civilian prisoners and fishermen, while securing the release of 68 Pakistani prisoners and fishermen from India. In 2021-22, Pakistan facilitated the land route supply of approximately 40,000 MT of Indian wheat to Afghanistan as a humanitarian gesture. Additionally, Pakistan decided to send its cricket team to India for the ICC Cricket World

Cup, despite India's refusal to send its team to the Asia Cup hosted by Pakistan (MoFA, 2024b).

It must not be taken into consideration that the increased geo-economics has wiped out the geopolitical realms, as this is not the case. Instead, they remained to be an integral part of relations that encountered with economics. Trade and economic relations were disrupted by various reasons, terrorism events and Kashmir problem (Abbas & Khan, 2023). This illustrated that how intricately geopolitics and geo-economics interact to determine Pakistan's foreign policy towards India approving the prism of complex interdependence within neo-liberalism (Keohane & Nye, 2011). To sum up, geo-economic factors became important in Pakistan-Indian ties. However, the complexity of this link suggested that geopolitics and geo-economics are not fields that are mutually exclusive; rather, they interact and intersect in intricate ways.

The relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan have a complicated history of geopolitical competition and economic collaboration. The neo-liberal emphasis on economic integration and collaboration, however, framed the transition to geo-economics and added new aspects to this bilateral relationship (Harvey, 2007). Due to its proximity, shared racial and cultural bonds, and geopolitical interests, Pakistan has historically had a substantial impact on Afghan politics. However, the dynamics of this connection have been changing as a result of the shifting nature of the global economic order and the growing significance of regional economic cooperation (Baqai & Wasi, 2021).

According to the neoliberal viewpoint, international financial institutions, transnational businesses, and private sector actors have taken center stage in determining foreign policy (Harvey, 2007). Trade and investment are two important areas. Over the

years, trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has flourished despite intermittent hostilities, mostly due to the shared interests of the private sector (Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d.-e).

The main exports from Pakistan include food items, building supplies, and home goods, whereas Afghanistan exports fresh fruit, nuts, and minerals. The easy movement of commodities was made possible by the transit trade agreement (MoCom, n.d.), a major step towards geo-economic integration, the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) made it easier for commodities to flow between the two countries and gave Afghan goods access to the Indian border, underscoring the importance of economic factors in determining foreign policy (Asian Development Bank, n.d.-a).

The possibility for economic collaboration existed despite the geopolitical difficulties, as seen by Pakistan's investments in Afghanistan's banking, construction, and telecommunications industries. For instance, Pakistani telecom firms have made a significant contribution to the establishment of cellular networks in Afghanistan, promoting societal connectivity and economic growth. The total trade volume of Afghanistan and Pakistan exceeded to \$2 billion in 2023 (Khan et al., (2024).

Afghan cargo trucks entered Pakistan under the Temporary Admission Document (TAD) system for the first time, facilitating smoother bilateral trade between the two countries. The implementation aims to simplify the movement of goods, enhancing trade and economic ties. The TAD system is in a one-year trial phase and expected to streamline transit for both Afghan and Pakistani transporters (Khan, 2024a).

By supporting infrastructure projects that improve connectivity, commerce, and economic cooperation, international financial organizations like the Asian Development

Bank and the World Bank have profoundly impacted the bilateral relationship. These comprise border crossing points, transportation networks, and energy transmission lines, which support regional integration and the advancement of common economic interests (Petry, 2023). Pakistan's support to Afghanistan in the healthcare sector, in particular, has been an important component of the overall development cooperation. Pakistan has supported Afghanistan in setting up multiple healthcare facilities across the country, including three hospitals in Kabul, Jalalabad, and Logar (MoFA, 2024c).

Additionally, Pakistan has actively supported efforts to leverage Afghanistan's potential as a regional connectivity hub. This includes Pakistan's involvement in major connectivity projects such as TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline), TAP (Trans-Afghan Pipeline), CASA-1000 (Central Asia-South Asia power project), and the Trans Afghan Railway Project (MoFA, 2024c). The notion of extension CPEC to Afghanistan, even though it is in planning stage, fetched the more inclination towards geo-economics fostering regional connectivity. Regional programs and agreements like the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) have given Pakistan and Afghanistan a forum for economic cooperation and discussion. Such initiatives promote the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics by placing a greater emphasis on shared economic advantages than on political differences (Wasi, 2023).

Pakistan has been a key partner of Afghanistan in education and human resource development, enhancing people-to-people and educational connections between the two nations. Pakistan has provided fully-funded scholarships to over 4,500 Afghan students to support their capacity-building needs. Additionally, over 50,000 Afghan professionals who

studied in Pakistani institutions are now contributing to Afghanistan's socio-economic development across various sectors (MoFA, 2024c).

However, it is impossible to overlook the geopolitical aspects of the relations as it is interlinked with the complex interdependence doctrinarians of neo-liberalism. The economic relationship is nonetheless impacted by problems including border disputes, refugee crises, and the involvement of major powers. For instance, security concerns and border closures frequently cause cross-border trade to be hindered (Baqai & Wasi, 2021).

Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan in the context of the shift to geo-economics have taken on new forms. It remained important to mitigate the geo-strategic and geopolitical realms, but the foreign policy has been changed with the economy in the key role based on trade, investment and regional co-operation in the light of neo-liberalism (Keohane & Nye, 1998).

This relationship between Pakistan and Iran examined the intricate relationship of geo-politics and geo-economics, likely as others, the tilt towards geo-economics has been assessed. The economic cooperation between the two nations has proven resilience and kept developing despite political disagreements and sporadic difficulties (Keohane & Nye, 2011). One of the most important facets of Pakistan and Iran's bilateral relationship is their trade relations and about \$2 billion worth of trade occurred between the two countries in 2022 (Khan, 2023). Despite the international community's sanctions against Iran, bilateral trade has continued in important sectors such as agricultural items, textiles, and medicines, all of which are free from sanctions (Khan, 2023).

For the first time in the history of Pakistan-Iran economic relations, the volume of bilateral trade exceeded \$2 billion, this was revealed during a farewell meeting for the

outgoing Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseini with Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at the Ministry of Economic Affairs in 2023. The ambassador further appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Economic Affairs for successfully conducting the 21st Session of the Pakistan-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC). He highlighted that the bilateral negotiations between Pakistan and Iran, on transportation, customs and commerce, are reaching to a conclusion in the near future. (Recorder Report, 2023). The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is facilitating trade and potentially resolve issues like Balochistan, Afghanistan, and CPEC (MoFA. (n.d.-d).

As witnessed in April 2024, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pledged to increase bilateral trade to \$10 billion in five years (Reuters, 2024). Both sides agreed to expedite the finalization of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and to hold the next sessions of the Annual Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC), the Joint Business Trade Committee (JBTC), and the 22nd round of Joint Economic Commission (JEC) negotiations (MoFA, 2024d). They also agreed to facilitate the regular exchange of economic and technical experts and delegations from Chambers of Commerce to enhance economic cooperation (MoFA, n.d.-d). Pakistan's imports from Iran surpassed \$1 billion in FY24, marking an 18% increase compared to the previous year. This rise is primarily driven by oil and energy imports, contributing to Pakistan's growing economic ties with Iran despite regional challenges (ProPK Staff, 2024).

Additionally, they agreed to declare the 'Reemdan border point' as an international border crossing to open the remaining two border sustenance markets (MoFA, 2024d). These markets aim to legalize trade, curb smuggling, and boost economic activity in border

regions (MoFA, n.d.-d). This initiative is significant for the local economies and is a practical step towards strengthening bilateral economic relations. All these evidences strongly approve the tilt to towards geo-economics in the light of neo-liberalism.

Pakistan and Iran signed eight MoUs aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation across a broad spectrum of areas (Syed, 2024). This suggested that the two nations' economic interactions remained strong and supported by the resilient and shared interests of the private sector (Robinson, 2023). Both sides recognized the SCO's importance for regional security and development, emphasizing its economic and connectivity potential. They were satisfied with their SCO cooperation and stressed resuming the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. Acknowledging, the ECO region's economic potential, they called for active cooperation among ECO members. They agreed that collaboration between SCO and ECO could significantly enhance regional progress and development. (MoFA, 2024d). These events strongly endorsed a shift towards geo-economics, highlighting the potential for regional cooperation and development under neo-liberal principles (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

The influence of international organizations on the development of the Pakistan-Iran relationship has been another intriguing aspect. For instance, Pakistan's relationship with Iran may be impacted by the International Monetary Fund's participation there because following IMF principles frequently entails supporting international sanctions against Iran (Ali, 2022).

The projected Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project remained a noteworthy illustration of geo-economic cooperation has been revived expected to transport 21.5 million cubic meters of gas per day to Pakistan. This pipeline would help Pakistan fill its

energy gap, highlighting the importance of economic factors in foreign policy choices (Subohi, 2024). The completion of this project would strengthen the geo-economic interactions while also deepening economic integration.

Geopolitical concerns, however, cannot be completely disregarded. The bilateral relationship is frequently complicated by worries over its regional aspirations, its rivalry with Saudi Arabia (a strong friend of Pakistan), and the presence of non-state actors (Siddiqa, 2023). The implementation of collaborative projects like the IP gas pipeline remained in confusion, and the full potential of economic relations remained constrained by US sanctions against Iran (Singh & Lewis, 2024).

The shift from geopolitics to geo-economics has created new opportunities for Pakistan and Iran to work together, particularly in the commerce and energy sectors. The neo-liberal paradigm offered insightful explanations of how economic interdependence and collaboration can serve as a stabilizing influence in the partnership. However, the continuation of geopolitical issues serves as a reminder that geopolitics and geo-economics interact in a complicated, multifaceted manner, necessitating a nuanced and practical foreign policy strategy.

Pakistan's ties with its neighbors were significantly impacted by the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics. It opened up fresh opportunities for collaboration and suggested potential solutions to old disputes. However, it also presented geo-political aspects and intended balanced strategy that tried to navigate the interaction between geopolitics and geo-economics.

## **5.5 Transforming Relations with the Islamic World**

There is no overstating of the fact that inter-Islamic solidarity with the international affairs and foreign policy formulation is vital for a country like Pakistan. The geo-politics and geo-economics dynamics vogue greatly in shaping Pakistan's relationship with Muslim stakeholders (OIC, 2022). This part examined kind of changes geo-politics as well as geo-economics has made in the foreign policy of Muslim states and main Islamic groups. This portion analyzed Pakistan's economic collaboration, strategic cooperation, and diplomatic effort in the Neo-liberalism system, by presenting the facet of international relations (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

### **5.5.1 Analysis of changes in Pakistan's foreign policy with KSA and Turkey**

The shift in Pakistan's foreign policy towards the KSA from geopolitics to geo-economics has been seen as a reorientation of the focus away from strategic and military cooperation towards a greater economic interdependence (Masood & Abi-Habib, 2019). The bilateral relationship was originally defined by historical alliances and common religious values (Amin, 2021) but a more economically oriented strategy is progressively replacing it.

As an illustration, negotiations around Saudi Arabia's proposed involvement in the CPEC signaled a trend towards infrastructure development and shared economic prosperity, which is a cornerstone of geo-economics (Naz, 2020). Additionally, demonstrating the interaction of geopolitics and geo-economics is Pakistan's interest in joining the Saudi-led Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), which demonstrates the confluence of economic and security interests (Amin et al., 2022).

The KSA remained one of Pakistan's major remittance suppliers, and the two nations have kept up robust trading connections. There existed more possibility for expanded commercial links with Pakistan as a result of Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030" project, which wants to diversify its economy and lessen its reliance on oil (Ibrahim, 2023). Following the given fact, this area has also given geo-economic component of Pakistan's foreign policy that meant investments in various sectors such as agriculture industry and services. The neoliberal philosophy is one where economic interdependence is seen as a catalyst and an engine for more friendly ties and more cooperation accordingly (Harvey, 2007).

Pakistan participation in the Middle East's summit of the Future Investment Initiative (FII) provided a tendency of new relations establishment between the countries on business matters level (MoFA, 2018). This entailed a symbolic shift in Pakistan's stance on foreign policy from geopolitics to geo-economics.

Trade between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has increased because of the neo-liberal system, as both nations look to broaden their markets and capitalize on advantages. As per data of 2021 both countries are indulged in enhancing trade as following figure 4.1 explains the products and trade volume of 2021:



In 2022, Pakistan exported goods worth \$507 million to Saudi Arabia, while Saudi Arabia's exports to Pakistan amounted to \$4.5 billion. Pakistan's trade relations with Saudi Arabia have grown steadily, with Pakistan exporting \$563 million in FY 2023-24. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's exports to Pakistan amounted to \$4.8 billion, primarily comprising petroleum products. The total trade volume reached \$5.363 billion in FY 2023-24, showing promising potential for further growth through economic cooperation. For instance, during the first seven months of fiscal year 2023-24 (July-January), Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia surged by 27%, totaling \$394 million, compared to \$311 million in the same period the previous year. Conversely, imports from Saudi Arabia increased by 10%, amounting to \$2.730 billion (Shaikh, 2024).

This shift on to geo-economic approach has been also evident. The case of Saudi Arabia made it more clear as they promised to earmark \$20 billion, mostly in the energy sector, for the government of Pakistan during Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's visit in the year 2019 (Masood & Abi- Habib, 2019).

In April 2024, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia committed to fast-tracking \$5 billion Saudi investment in Pakistan. In a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, they emphasized strengthening trade and investment ties (MoIB, 2024). Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud led a delegation to Pakistan in April 2024, to follow up on agreements and enhanced bilateral economic cooperation. The visit included high-level meetings and the Saudi Arabia-Pakistan Investment Conference, where sector-specific investment opportunities were emphasized. Key sectors identified included energy, infrastructure, and technology (MoFA, 2024e). The visit and agreements underscored the deepening partnership and

mutual commitment to economic growth as the neo-liberalist paradigm suggest (Harvey, 2007).

Saudi Arabia has offered a 15% investment in Pakistan's Reko Diq copper and gold mining project. The investment includes infrastructure development, particularly road construction around the project site. This is part of a larger plan where Pakistan expects up to \$5 billion in Saudi investment in its mining and agriculture sectors each year (ARY News, 2024). Pakistan's IT exports to Saudi Arabia reached \$310 million in April 2024, the highest recorded in a single month. This significant growth is attributed to investment-friendly policies introduced by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) (ARY News, 2024a).

Saudi Arabia has signed nine Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with Pakistani trade partners to promote tourism, aiming to increase visitors from Pakistan by 43% in 2024. The agreements focus on business and leisure tourism, with a goal of attracting 2.7 million Pakistani tourists by offering easier visa processes and showcasing diverse tourist destinations (Dawn, 2024c).

Through the lens of neoliberal approach, it was evident that Pakistan's foreign policy towards the KSA witnessed a move from geopolitics to geo-economics. Besides, geopolitical factors, such as the security issue, also was tackled in a cooperative manner.

Looking at the Pakistan-Turkey relationship the change from the geopolitics to the geo-economics has been seen considerably. Such transition is consistent with the neo-liberal theory that insists upon the economic institutions, instrumental use of cooperation, and mutual economic interdependence to safeguard peace and stability (Keohane & Nye, 1977). The prevalent growth of inclusive economic and managerial relations between the

two cooperating states actualize this change. Its hard to have a doubt that the 2015 start of the Turkey-Pakistan FTA talks provided the evidence of two states' recognition of the trends of their economies for the increase of the trade liberalization (MoCom, n.d).

In May 2024, Pakistan and Türkiye aimed to increase their annual bilateral trade to \$5 billion, focusing on enhancing cooperation in trade, investment, defense, and security. Both nations plan to enhance their economic collaboration, particularly through government and business partnerships, under the framework of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council and the Strategic Economic Framework. This goal was highlighted during a meeting between Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Pakistani officials, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar (Syed, 2024). The signing of the Trade in Goods Agreement/Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) was held in 2022 (Amin, 2024).

In Pakistan, there are 17 firms operating with significant Turkish investment, primarily concentrated in the energy, finance, infrastructure, and contracting sectors, with construction being the leading industry for Turkish investors. Meanwhile, Türkiye hosts a total of 233 firms with Pakistani capital. Between 2002 and 2019, Pakistani companies invested \$80 million directly in Türkiye. These firms are predominantly involved in the automotive, electronics, telecommunications, machinery, trade, and banking sectors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022). Turkey has expressed interest in joining the CPEC (OBOReurope, 2020), which was an intriguing example of a large area of convergence. This illustrates a tendency towards regional economic integration, denoting the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics. This transformation is also seen in Turkey's assistance to Pakistan during hard times economically.



In 2021, Turkey exported \$822M to Pakistan. The main products exported from Turkey to Pakistan were Raw Cotton (\$115M), Non-Retail Pure Cotton Yarn (\$48.1M), and Petroleum Gas (\$45M). Whereas, In 2021, Pakistan exported \$325M to Turkey. The main products exported from Pakistan to Turkey were Heavy Pure Woven Cotton (\$113M), Non-Retail Pure Cotton Yarn (\$24.1M), and Light Pure Woven Cotton (\$14M) (Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d.-a). In fiscal year 2023-2024, despite enjoying friendly relations, bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Turkiye stands at only \$1 billion (Business Recorder, 2024b).

In 2011, Pakistan and Turkey signed a Currency Swap Arrangement (CSA) in Istanbul. The central bank governors of both countries signed the agreement, valued at \$1 billion in local currencies (Dawn, 2011). This arrangement aimed to finance bilateral trade in local currencies and strengthen economic ties between the two nations. The development of the local currencies as a significant tool was a clear illustration of the idea of neoliberal institutionalism that states generate new foundations and traditions in order to receive the best results (Keohane, 1984). In this way, Pakistan and Turkey's relation signified that West Asia is moving out from geopolitics to geo-economics.

This shift obviously has far-reaching implications for Pakistan's foreign policy, accordingly the focus has been on the maximization of the geo-economic gains while preferably handling the geopolitical complexities of the bilateral relationship. Pakistan-Turkey relations have been imprinted in history with a special interest on defense and technology relations. Hence, the sharing of the interests to produce defense items like the co-production of aircrafts and warships made this point plausible (Sheikh, 2023). These kind of pacts imparted impetus to the economy of Pakistan and helped to progress

technologically, which is in concordance with the neo liberal ideology of mutual benefits (Harvey, 2007).

Thus, it is clear how geopolitics and geo-economics interacted and shifting towards geo-economics more in relations between Pakistan and Turkey. Although apparently, the change to a neoliberal paradigm that emphasized economic interdependence is nevertheless entangled with geopolitical concerns.

### **5.5.2 Analyzing Dynamics with other key Muslim States**

The interactions between Egypt and Pakistan has also shifted in the twenty-first century in favor of geo-economics. Their strong attempts to promote bilateral commerce, investment, and economic cooperation showed this change in orientation (Dawn, 2021). Pakistan offered Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to Egypt envisaging boosting trade volume to 4 billion dollars against the current 400 million dollars (Amin, 2024). Promoting investments is another area of concern for both nations. Thousands of jobs have been created and the economy has benefited thanks to large investments made in Pakistan's telecommunications industry by Egypt's Orascom Investment Holding (OIH) (Business Today Egypt, 2022). According to neoliberal ideas that emphasize economic interdependence for mutual growth (Keohane, 1984), the proposed FTA is projected to boost bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

The common economic interests and a shared desire for prosperity, the relationship has shifted more towards geo-economic factors between Malaysia and Pakistan. One significant indicator of the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics is the signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This FTA, the first of its type between a Southeast Asian and South Asian state (MoCom, n.d). The Malaysia-Pakistan Closer Economic Partnership

Agreement (MPCEPA) was signed to cover trade liberalization in goods and services, investment, and bilateral technical cooperation in areas such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures, intellectual property protection, construction, tourism, healthcare, and telecommunications (Ministry of International Trade and Industry, 2024).

Additionally, initiatives have been taken to increase investment in each other's countries. Malaysian businesses have made investments in Pakistan's telecommunications, infrastructure, energy, and banking industries, among others. Pakistan has promoted Malaysian investment through the CPEC in its Special Economic Zones, emphasizing the geo-economic focus (Radio Pakistan, 2018).

As the focus shifted from geopolitical to geo-economic factors, Pakistan's relationship with Qatar underwent a significant adjustment. This alliance, which based on neoliberal ideals, showed how economic interdependence and shared wealth may alter diplomatic relations and foreign policies (Keohane & Nye, 2011). The substantial contributions of the Pakistan's diaspora in Qatar, who not only act as a strong cultural link but also play a significant part in the Qatar's economy, have also served to strengthen the conventional geopolitical narrative (Kiani, 2021).

The shift was mainly traced to Qatar's position as one of the world's top natural gas producers and Pakistan's growing energy requirements. The largest deal ever in Pakistan's history, a \$16 billion contract for the delivery of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) was struck between Pakistan and Qatar in 2016. The agreement served as an example of Pakistan's foreign policy emphasis on securing energy supplies to support its expanding economy (Rana, 2016). Since then, Qatar has taken over as Pakistan's main LNG supplier, providing 15% of all of the nation's gas needs (Kiani, 2021). Additionally, Qatar has planned to invest

\$3 billion in Pakistan, focusing on various sectors like airports, seaports, LNG power plants, and solar energy to alleviate Pakistan's economic crisis (Hussain, 2022).

Likewise, there has been a noticeable shift in the relationship between Pakistan and the UAE towards geo-economic collaboration (Dawn, 2021). The Pakistani diaspora in the UAE, one of the biggest and most influential foreign communities in the country, has played a significant role in this shift. Remittances from Pakistani workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) rose by 8% year-on-year to \$409 million in November 2023, according to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan. This represents an increase of \$29 million compared to the \$380 million remitted during the same period in the previous fiscal year. While showing a positive trend compared (News Desk, 2023). The UAE has pledged \$10 billion in investments to Pakistan, following a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed. This initiative aims to strengthen Pakistan's economy and boost bilateral cooperation, complementing similar investments from Saudi Arabia (Arif, 2024).

Pakistan's meat exports hit a record \$512 million in FY24, marking a 20% increase due to higher international demand and competitive pricing following the rupee devaluation. The UAE remains the largest market, followed by Saudi Arabia, with new markets emerging in Vietnam and Central Asia (The Newspaper's Staff Reporter, 2024).

UAE ranked among Pakistan's biggest trading partners. Particularly, in industries like telecommunication, real estate, and energy, the UAE has been a key source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for Pakistan. Pakistan and the UAE inked several Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs), paving the way for multi-billion dollar investments in diverse initiatives outlined by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) (APP, 2023). The

UAE's assistance to Pakistan amid economic crises, such as the \$6 billion aid package delivered in 2018 to help handle balance of payments concerns, is more evidence of this economic interdependence (Rana, 2018).

Moreover, UAE Increased Pakistan Financial Assistance to \$3 Billion in 2023, to provide \$1 billion in fresh loan, and rollover \$2 billion (Dilawar, 2023). Pakistan is seeking investment from the UAE in five key mineral projects, focusing on copper and gold mines in Balochistan, Waziristan, and Gwadar. The investment is expected to drive economic growth and strengthen the mining sector under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) initiative (Pakistan Today, 2024d).

To sum up, geo-economic factors were increasingly taking precedence over geopolitical dynamics in Pakistan-UAE relations. The shift towards a more economically reliant relationship underscores the significance of economic factors in determining foreign policy, in line with neoliberal ideas.

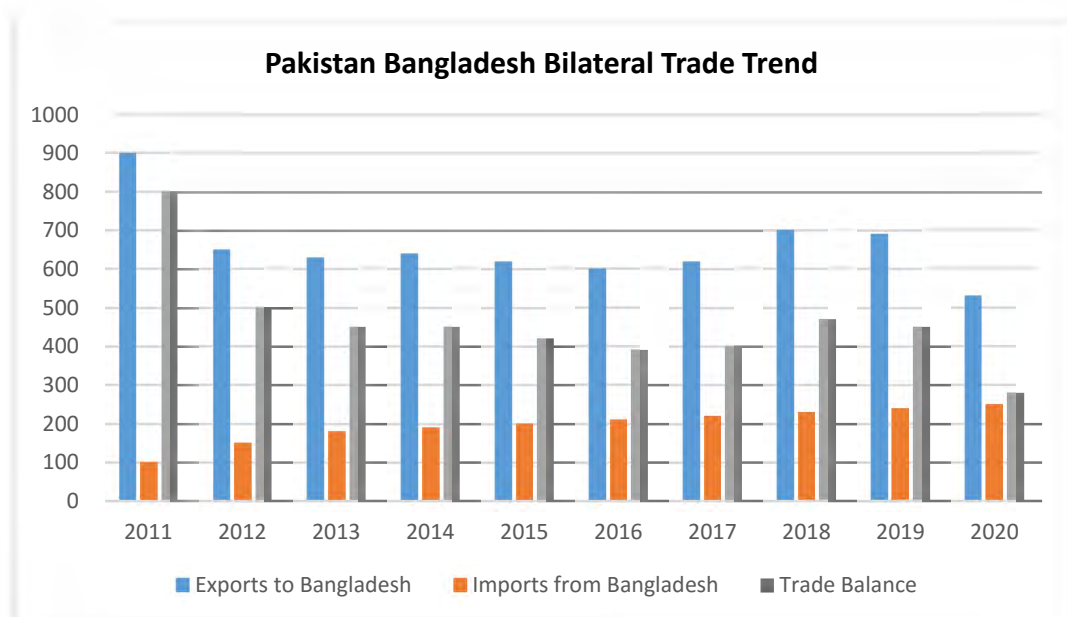
Geo-economics has taken on a more prominent role, changing the dynamics of relations between Pakistan and Indonesia (GoP, 2022). In particular, trade ties have improved, with Indonesia now ranking as one of Pakistan's top ASEAN trading partners. Total trade between Pakistan and Indonesia stood at 5 billion USD in 2022. Bilateral commerce has grown, notably since the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). In contrast to Pakistan, which exports textiles, rice, and surgical tools to Indonesia, Indonesia exports a wide variety of goods to Pakistan, including palm oil, paper, and automobiles (MoFA. (n.d.-e).

Moreover, in 2022, Indonesia's Ambassador to Pakistan, Adam Mulawarman Tugio, announced a special capacity-building program to uplift Pakistan's tourism sector.

He emphasized enhancing mutual cooperation in trade, textiles, and other key sectors. The ambassador also highlighted plans to resume palm oil exports and strengthen ties through educational and cultural initiatives, including establishing an Indonesia corner at the University of Peshawar (Bureau Report, 2022). Additionally, collaboration in tourism and programs for the exchange of human capital has strengthened this geo-economic link under neo-liberal notion (Recorder Report, 2023).

The Bangladesh and Pakistan, both countries have come to the realization that improved bilateral relations are necessary for their respective economies. This understanding has been reflected in both countries' efforts to deepen their economic links, signaling a shift in their relationship towards a geo-economic perspective (GoP, 2022; Keohane & Nye, 2011). Following Figure 5.6 shows bilateral trade trend between Pakistan and Bangladesh:

**Figure 5.6: Pakistan – Bangladesh Bilateral Trade Trend** (*Pakistan Business Council, 2021*)



Bilateral trade between Pakistan and Bangladesh for the year 2020-21 was \$721.67 million, Pakistani exports being \$650.21 million and imports \$71.45 million. Bangladesh is one of the top 10 export destinations for Pakistani products. Pakistan's trade with Bangladesh witnessed a surplus of 46.65 percent during the first six months of financial year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year (Hassan, 2022). The overall exports to Bangladesh were recorded at \$399.408 million during July-December against exports of \$274.246 million, showing growth of 45.63 percent, meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, exports during December 2021 increased 52.01 percent, from \$54.433 million to \$82.746 million (ibid). Bangladesh's search for new salt sources, due to production disruptions in India, has led to a surge in Pakistani salt exports. Relaxed trade policies in Bangladesh have further fueled demand, positioning Pakistan as a key supplier in the region (Pakistan Today, 2024).

This positive trade balance highlights Pakistan's geo-economic advantages in encouraging stronger trade ties with Bangladesh. In parallel, the private sectors of both nations have been establishing business alliances. A shift towards geo-economics can be seen in the expanding presence of Pakistani companies in Bangladesh (Prime Minister's Office, 2020). These actions were consistent with neoliberalism and showed a shared understanding of the advantages that economic cooperation can provide for both countries.

### **5.5.3 Change in relations with other Gulf Muslim States, Central Asian, African Muslim Countries and Organization of Islamic Conference**

Pakistan's connections with other Gulf Muslim states like Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, and Oman likewise showed the geopolitical dynamics shifting to geo-economic dynamics. Notably Oman and Bahrain, have seen strengthened economic ties with Pakistan,

especially in sectors like fisheries, mining, and finance. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a bloc has been an important market for Pakistani exports, particularly in textiles and agricultural products.

Pakistan and the GCC have concluded the final round of negotiations and inked a preliminary deal on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and it has been expected to boost trade and investment between Pakistan and the GCC (Dawn News, 2023). The agreement also expected to create new jobs and opportunities for businesses in both regions (MoIB, 2023). The neoliberal viewpoint, which emphasizes the importance of economic interdependence in international relations, is in line with this transition.

Similarly, Pakistan has been an important partner for Kuwait in the Gulf, their relationship focus on geo-economics has become more apparent, nevertheless. Pakistan signed several MoUs with Kuwait to attract multi-billion dollar investment in 2023, to boost its economy (SIFC, 2023). The intention to investigate new opportunities for economic cooperation, with an emphasis on enhancing bilateral trade and investment, particularly in line with the mechanism of SIFC (Arab News Pakistan, 2024).

Another illustration of this transformation is Oman, a close and longtime ally of Pakistan. Increased economic interaction with Pakistan is ongoing and possible more opportunity be given by Oman's "Vision 2040" growth plan, which aims to diversify the country's economy and lessen its reliance on oil (International Monetary Fund, 2024). Pakistan's exports to Oman stood at \$193 million in FY23 which are much below the potential that exists between the two countries. Omani Consul General Eng Sami Abdullah urged Pakistan to export more agricultural products and textile items to Oman, and advised exploring investment opportunities in Oman's ports. He also mentioned the possibility of a

'One Visa' for GCC countries to facilitate trade (Recorder Report, 2023), demonstrating the growing importance of geo-economics in line with neo-liberalist idea (Harvey, 2007).

Due to their strategic location, abundant resources, and cultural affinities with Pakistan, Central Asian Republics (CARs) retain a prominent place in Pakistan's foreign policy. These nations i.e. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have grown in importance as geopolitics and geo-economics interact with one another in Pakistan's foreign policy (MoFA, n.d.-f).

Pakistan's foreign policy has more shifted in favor of geo-economics with regard to the CARs (GoP, 2022). The trade between Pakistan and Azerbaijan crossed \$28 million in 2022. During FY 2023, trade between Pakistan and Tajikistan stood at \$US 36.46 million. The bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Kazakhstan in 2022-23 stood at US\$ 139.33 million, with balance of trade in Pakistan's favor. Exports to Kazakhstan were US\$ 132.73 million, and imports were US\$ 5.58 million (MoFA, n.d.-f). Kazakhstan and Pakistan have launched the Trans-Afghan Multimodal Transport Corridor, enhancing regional connectivity. This trade route passes through Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, connecting Kazakhstan to Pakistan's ports and further to the Middle East. The corridor is part of broader efforts to boost economic cooperation and reduce transit times between Central Asia, South Asia, and beyond (Rafiq, 2024).

Uzbekistan is the largest consumer market and second biggest economy in Central Asia. Uzbekistan is the first Central Asian country Pakistan has signed bilateral Transit Trade Agreement (UPTTA) and bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) on 17 items (MoCom, n.d.). Bilateral trade with Pakistan (Jan-Dec 2021) amounted to US\$126.05

million, with US\$88.18 million exports to Pakistan and US\$ 37.87 million imports from Pakistan (MoFA, n.d.-f).

Pakistan's "Vision Central Asia" policy focuses on building stronger economic, cultural, and political ties with Central Asian Republics (Prime Minister's Office, 2021). This includes leveraging its geographic location for trade connectivity between these landlocked nations and Arabian Sea ports, fostering cultural exchanges and tourism, and bolstering political relations for regional stability. Energy cooperation and mutual support in international forums, like the SCO, are also key components of this policy (The President of Pakistan, 2023), in lined with neo-liberalist principles.

Pakistan's approach to the CPEC, a centerpiece project of BRI that also significantly involves the CARs, to establish a link to Central Asia by linking Pakistan's Gwadar port with China's Xinjiang province (Wolf, 2018). Initiatives to promote economic cooperation, for instance, the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA) between China, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan aims to promote economic integration and ease transit trade (Aziz, 2019).

The TAPI gas pipeline project, which connects Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, also demonstrates Pakistan's geo-economic shift. When finished, this project will not only assist Pakistan meet its energy needs, but it will also improve regional connection, offer the possibility of job creation, support infrastructure development, and encourage economic integration (MoFA, n.d.-f). Investment cooperation is a significant way that Pakistan's relations with CARs are transitioning from geopolitics to geo-economics. Such investments highlight the geo-economic factors that shape their foreign policy philosophies (Mir, Kasi, & Kasi, 2022).

A renewed emphasis on linkages and infrastructure development also demonstrates the change in Pakistan's relations with CARs from geopolitics to geo-economics. An illustration of this focus is the CASA (Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project) -1000 project, which includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and seeks to build an energy corridor from Central to South Asia (MoFA, n.d.-f). Furthermore, rather than sticking to their traditional security-focused agendas, regional organizations like the ECO, which Pakistan and a few Central Asian states are a part of, are placing more emphasis on economic integration, trade liberalization, and transportation links (Asia Regional Integration Center, 2024). Pakistan's extensive participation in these groups and initiatives demonstrates its preference for geo-economic goals over geopolitical ones.

However, this geo-economic transformation is not without its difficulties. Insecurity in Afghanistan threatens national security and obstructs communication between Pakistan and the CARs (Galistcheva, 2018). Moreover, it is difficult to realize the full geo-economic potential of Pakistan-CAR relations because of India's expanding influence in the CARs and its rivalry with Pakistan (Zuridinov, 2022).

Likewise, there has been a noticeable shift in the relations towards geo-economics between Pakistan and African Muslim Countries, with a greater focus on trade, investment, and economic cooperation (Recorder Report, 2023a). In order to strengthen trade links with African nations, Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce launched the "Look Africa" Policy Initiative in 2017. The project aimed to expand Pakistan's export market, draw in capital, and investigate possible opportunities for economic and commercial collaboration (MoCom, n.d.-a).

In a similar spirit, Pakistan sponsored the Fourth Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference in (January) 2024, bringing together stakeholders from Pakistan and various African nations as well as corporate leaders, policymakers, and decision-makers, to strengthen commercial ties with Pakistan (Press Release, 2024). The sequel of conference signaled again shift to a geo-economic foreign policy direction by focusing on boosting trade volumes and broadening trade connections. Additionally, an emphasis has been placed on fortifying ties through capacity building and aid for development. This pattern is reflected in Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "Engage Africa" policy. This effort, started to double Pakistan's commerce with African countries (MoFA. (n.d.-g).

The policy, which is still in its early phases, showed a change in Pakistan's attitude towards Africa from the country's previous solidarity-based diplomacy to a more economically motivated involvement. This approach was based on the understanding that Africa has enormous economic potential, which is fueled by its fast expanding middle class, rapid urbanization, and digital revolution. Notably, Nigeria is one of the continent's largest economies and has a majority of Muslims, making it a desirable partner for Pakistan (Recorder Report, 2023). Bilateral trade volume stood at US\$ 241.79 Million in 2022-23 with Exports US\$ 31.28 Million and Imports US\$ 210.51 Million (MoFA. (n.d.-g).

Potential areas for economic collaboration included agriculture, pharmaceuticals, textiles, information technology, and the Halal food sector. For instance, Pakistan and Morocco, a major producer of phosphates in the world, agreed to cooperate in the fertilizer industry. Bilateral trade volume stood at US\$ 1005 Million in 2021-22 with Imports US\$ 972.61 Million and Exports US\$ 32.37 Million (Ibid). Such interactions highlight Pakistan's Africa policy's transition from geopolitics to geo-economics. Moreover,

initiatives have been made to strengthen interpersonal connections to grow tourism, trade, and investment.

Finally, it is evident that Pakistan's ties with African Muslim states are growing increasingly based on economy. This shift denoted a wave of neo-liberal thinking, which is built on a vision where economic interdependence and collaboration is a key factor determining international relations. On a wider scale, the planet is on the path towards economic globalization and regional integration.

Pakistan resorts to both geopolitics and geo-economics and the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2024), hence, has become an important platform in that process. At geo-economical level, the OIC is the source of great hope for enhancing trades and economic interdependence among Muslim countries. Pakistan has been actively instructing the economic integration among the countries members of OIC within the scope of its geographical strategy, underlining the effectiveness of the joint economic capacities utilization of the group (Zikriya et al., 2022).

The Pakistan's efforts to build intraregional commerce, investments and joint ventures, clearly pointed out to its geo-economic cooperation that are based on the OIC membership (BR Web Desk, 2019). The tendency aimed to harmonize policies including trade liberalization, investment promotion among member countries, knowledge exchange facilitation, and digital infrastructure to connect all the countries (Zikriya et al., 2022).

The evolution of the "OIC 2025: Program of Action" (OIC, n.d.) demonstrates the OIC's tilt towards geo-economic factors. Pakistan was a major contributor to its creation, highlighting the importance of advancing the private sector's involvement, strengthening human resource development, and promoting scientific collaboration (Ahmed &

Akbarzadeh, 2023). Pakistan has also made a strong effort to promote Islamic finance as a means of encouraging economic development among OIC nations. This not only coincides with its geo-economic goals but also adheres to the fundamental OIC ideals (MoFA, 2024f), in line with neo-liberalism.

Pakistan has promoted the use of Islamic financial instruments within the OIC through seminars and other means of communication and in the “Islamabad Declaration 48th Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers” the participants made a resolve “We resolve to strengthen cooperation in economic and commercial fields by encouraging and facilitating greater interaction among the private sector, progressively eliminating all obstacles to the development of intra-Islamic trade including early operationalization and effective implementation of the Trade Preferential System (TPS-OIC) and related trade facilitation instruments, promote greater flow of investments, transfer of technology, undertake joint industrial projects, improved transportation and communication networks among the ports and cities of the Islamic World by land, air and sea, as appropriate, and accord priority to the development needs of the African Continent especially Sub-Saharan countries, and promote greater integration among regional economic groupings in the Islamic World” (OIC, 2022).

Pakistan's foreign policy is increasingly in line with its geo-economic vision. In order to conclude, Pakistan's engagement with the OIC, under the neoliberal framework, reflects its transition from geopolitics to geo-economics.

## **5.6 Impact on Security and Defense Posture**

Transition entailed departing from the old state of encirclement and the outmoded security doctrine to adopting new approaches that took into account economic interdependencies and regional connectivity (GoP, 2022).

Pakistan's geo-economic reorientation has been shifting the government focus from territorial defense to ensuring the economic corridors' safety that were significant for the economic progress and connectivity (Faisal, 2018). The example of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a project, where the security of the corridor remained the priority and was being met with both Pakistan and China (Gul et al., 2021).

Securing state's energy was fundamental need of national importance that remained conducive to the stability of nation's economy. Focus remained on strengthening regional energy trade and developing the energy infrastructure that were considered integral factors for a country's security strategy. The economic and geopolitical shift provided potential ways to fix Pakistan's energy requirement by making it more effective and cheaper to counter both the economic and strategic threats (Latief & Lefen, 2019; Kumar, 2010).

When it came to the sphere of defense too, Pakistan seemed to be transforming its naval strategy, which remained reflective of the fact that through its geo-economic priorities, it has been looking for the security of maritime and the facilitation of trade routes more significant than ever. This manifested through Pakistan's move to strengthen its maritime power capabilities and the country's active role in the missions against the piracy at the international level (Makarevich, 2021).

The growing dependence on the cyber space made cyber security a main point of the country's defense tactics, being the digital economy of the country at risk. Economic and financial infrastructure protection served as a noteworthy security issue, which was pinpointing a broader trend of addressing economic stability as a major part of the state security (Raza, 2024).

The importance of economic development brought non-traditional security threats at front like insurgency and terrorism threats in Pakistan. Insurgents and terrorism tactics has come to be viewed as a great obstacle to economic growth that could be overcome by a more integrated approach to counter these for investment friendly environment (Syed, 2019).

Security policy of Pakistan acquired new preferences as the result of the transformation of its regional dynamics that were comprised by the relations with neighboring states and the overall situation in the South Asian security. It was the inclination of Pakistan towards economic liberalization along with the changed security dynamics in Afghanistan post-9/11 matrix that necessitated a revision of Pakistan's security policies (Rej, 2017; Gul, Ullah, & Shah, 2021). This policy concept is built on neoliberal norms of a global economy that value economic relationships and interdependency more than using military for solutions (Harvey, 2007).

Despite the fact that the Pakistan's defense strategy has been transformed towards more diplomatic activity, its top priority remained the development of strong alliances to bolster its economic and security interests. It extended the reach and effect of the trade agreements by developing new alliances and working together with existing partners (Wolf, 2017).

Pakistan's foreign policy has led to a re-evaluation of their defense and security strategies (GoP, 2022). From the military pursuits, attention has been shifted to the comprehensive approach combined by the economic factors in the equations. This shift required having ideas to best deliver defense within the framework of economic development, and to tackle unconventional security challenges in order to accommodate the evolving regional dynamics. Pakistan's revised strategy of national security and defense showed the adoption of neoliberal policy tilting towards geo-economic preferences (Dawn, 2021).

### **5.7 Impact on Economic Policies and Agreements**

Pakistan's shift from a geo-political to a geo-economic approach in foreign policy has significantly influenced its economic policies, trade agreements, and investment strategies (SIFC, 2024; MoCom, n.d.). This analysis demonstrated the initiation of the transition to the market economy has changed Pakistan's economic interactions. Therefore, main distinctive feature of the geo-economic policy tools of Pakistan remained the CPEC and the establishment of SIFC (MoFA, 2024g). This economic corridor, which did not only contribute to the economic growth of Pakistan but also is a leg in the shift in the foreign policy of the country to more cooperative, collaborative and economically dependable states (Afzal & Naseem, 2018).

Pakistan's trade policies marked a significant improvement, geared towards diversification and greater integration into international value chains. This stands out in the struggle in the conclusion of Free Trade Agreement (FTAs) with several states in order to lower the barriers of trade and expand market accessibility for the Pakistan (MoCom, n.d.). For example, the second phase of Pakistan-China FTA became effective from 2019,

especially has provided more ease in trade featuring segments like agriculture and textiles (MoCom, 2019).

The investment strategies those were followed previously have been reshaped, thus there has been an accent on bringing in FDI in areas such as agriculture, mining, IT and defense production (SIFC, 2024). Board of Investment (BoI) and SIFC has been implementing policies aimed at attracting FDI promoting such things as incentivizing and simplifying processes (SIFC, 2024; Board of Investment, 2023).

The U.S. has been a significant trade partner and investor in Pakistan. The shift towards geo-economics is visible in Pakistan's efforts to attract more U.S. investments in technology and energy sectors. The U.S.-Pakistan Business Council has been instrumental in this regard, fostering economic ties beyond traditional security-based relationships (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). The U.S. GSP program, which Pakistan has benefited from, allows duty-free entry for various Pakistani products into the U.S. market. Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), serves as a strategic framework for dialogue on trade and investment issues between Pakistan and the USA (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2012). Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), Pakistan and the U.S. have discussed a BIT, but as of 2023, it had not been finalized (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022). A BIT would provide protections for investors and could potentially stimulate more U.S. investment in Pakistan.

Pakistan-Russia Intergovernmental Commission aimed to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation. It served as a platform for both countries to discuss and plan collaborative projects in various sectors. There have been agreements and negotiations for

Russian investment in Pakistan's energy sector, particularly in oil and gas exploration and production and in agriculture for food security (MoEA, n.d).

Trade liberalization efforts, such as China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement Phase II (CPFTA-II), signed in 2019, expanded upon the original FTA, aiming to provide Pakistani products with deeper market access to China (MoCom, 2019). China and Pakistan have focused on enhancing agricultural productivity in Pakistan, including technology transfer and investment in agri-based industries (Small, 2015). China has invested substantially in Pakistan's energy sector under CPEC, including in coal, hydro, wind, and solar energy projects (Garlick, 2021).

Industrial Cooperation and Special Economic Zones (SEZs), under CPEC, aimed to boost industrial growth in Pakistan with Chinese investment (Khalil & Zaidi, 2014). Digital Silk Road, cooperation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) under CPEC, including in areas like e-commerce and telecommunications (Afzal & Naseem, 2018)). Pak-China Free Trade Agreement in Services and Pak-China Early Harvest Programme are other agreements. Pakistan's economic diplomacy under the GSP+ scheme with the EU has been a success story. The scheme has allowed Pakistan's products preferential access to EU markets, significantly boosting exports. This engagement was part of Pakistan's broader strategy to leverage trade policy for economic growth (Soomro & Ansari, 2022).

As members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), neighboring countries were part of regional agreements aimed at enhancing economic cooperation, though progress has been limited due to political tensions (Dash, 2018). In August 2019, Pakistan suspended bilateral trade with India in response to India's decision

to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. This was a significant shift from the previous trade relations and Pakistan also cancelled the Most Favored Nation regarding India (Suneja, 2019).

The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) facilitated trade and transit between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Asian Development Bank. (n.d.-a). Pakistan-Iran Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) remained a foundational element of trade relations between Iran and Pakistan (MoCom, n.d.). In 2021, Pakistan and Iran agreed to establish border markets to enhance trade and curb smuggling through Border Markets Agreement. Along, Procedure for Operationalization of Barter Trade under the Agreement on Barter Trade Between Quetta Chamber of Commerce & Industry (QCCI), Pakistan and Zahidan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ZCCI), Iran has been formulated (MoFA, n.d.-d). Significant development has been noted in 2024 regarding much needed cooperation and several economic agreements were also signed (Reuters, 2024).

In 2024, several agreements and MoUs have been signed for improved investments and trade liberalization between Saudi and Pakistan senior leaderships (MoFA, 2024e). The labor market has been a significant area of cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Agreements have been made to facilitate and regulate the employment of Pakistani workers in Saudi Arabia, which is crucial for Pakistan's remittances (MoFA, 2021). There has been a substantial increase in Saudi investment in Pakistan, particularly in the energy sector. Saudi Arabia has provided economic and financial aid to Pakistan, including deposits in Pakistan's central bank and oil supply on deferred payments to help stabilize Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves and balance of payments (Shahzad, 2022).

Pak-Turk Strategic Economic Framework has been developed for strengthening Pakistan-Turkey's economic and political relationship. The Pakistan-Turkey Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations reflected a move towards enhanced trade and economic cooperation. Pakistan-Türkiye Trade in Goods Agreement Rules of Origin, 2023 is another policy substantiating the tilt towards geo-economics (MoCom, n.d.). Joint business councils have been set up to enhance trade and investment relations between Pakistan and Egypt. Commerce, cultural and educational exchanges between Pakistan and Egypt contribute to a better mutual understanding, supporting economic and trade relations (Recorder Report, 2024; APP, 2021).

The Malaysia-Pakistan Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (MPCEPA) has been pivotal in boosting trade relations and both countries have worked on further utilizing this agreement. Pakistan and Malaysia have established joint trade committees under the MPCEPA framework. (MoCom, n.d). Pak-Malaysia Early Harvest Programme is also an agreement. One of the most significant agreements between Pakistan and Qatar is the long-term LNG supply deal (Kiani, 2021). While not a formal trade agreement, the labor relationship between Pakistan and Qatar is significant, with a considerable number of Pakistani workers employed in various sectors in Qatar.

A significant aspect of the Pakistan-UAE relationship is the labor market. Agreements have been made to regulate and facilitate the employment of Pakistani workers in the UAE (Saeed, 2022). Joint business councils and forums have been established to enhance private sector collaboration and trade between the two countries (Dilawar, 2023). The main trade agreement between Pakistan and Indonesia is the Pakistan-Indonesia Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA). This agreement has been designed to enhance

bilateral trade by offering preferential tariff rates on a variety of goods between the two countries (MoCom, n.d). Pakistan has bilateral investment agreements with Bangladesh and SAARC countries. These agreements typically include dispute settlement provisions, which are crucial for facilitating and securing investments along discussion on FTA were also being going on (Pakistan Business Council, 2021).

Pakistan and the GCC have concluded the final round of negotiations and inked a preliminary deal on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and it has been expected to boost trade and investment between Pakistan and the GCC (Dawn News, 2023). This included not just labor market access but also attracting investments from the GCC in sectors like real estate, tourism, and energy. (Khan, 2023). Central Asian Republics have emerged as a key focus in Pakistan's foreign policy. The main trade agreements between Pakistan and Central Asian countries are Pakistan-Tajikistan Transit Trade Agreement that enhances transit trade between Pakistan and Tajikistan, Pakistan-Uzbekistan Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) that establishes preferential trade terms between Pakistan and Uzbekistan and Agreement on Transit Trade between Pakistan and Uzbekistan that facilitates transit trade between these two nations. Other CARs are also been negotiated for preferential agreements and trade has been boosted due to shift (MoCom, n.d).

Look Africa Policy Initiative, sought negotiations on bilateral and multilateral trade agreements for market access in Africa along formation of Joint Working Groups (JWGs) on trade; targets were major African economies such as Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Morocco, Senegal, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Tanzania, and Ethiopia (MoCom, n.d.-a). These countries collectively represent a significant portion of Africa's GDP. The policy aimed to double trade with African countries and included various measures to boost trade, such as

opening trade wings in key African nations and appointing local trade development officers (Fatima et al., 2023).

Pakistan's trade with Africa has been guided by various policies and agreements. Key policies include the Export Policy Order, 2022, Import Policy Order, 2022, Textiles and Apparel Policy 2020-25, e-Commerce Policy of Pakistan, National Tariff Policy 2019-24, and the Strategic Trade Policy Framework (; Fatima et al., 2023; MoCom, n.d.-a). These policies are designed to facilitate trade, streamline tariffs, and promote specific sectors like textiles and e-commerce (MoCom, n.d.-a). This initiative has led to the opening of new diplomatic missions and commercial sections in several African countries.

There's a growing emphasis on the digital economy and technological innovation. Policies aimed at digitalization, IT exports, and tech start-ups were being pursued to position Pakistan in the global digital economy (MoIT, n.d.). Pakistan's monetary policies have been geared towards stabilizing and sustaining economic growth. However, contractionary monetary policies have proven ineffective, indicating the need for more expansionary measures. Table 5.1 elucidates the shift to geo-economic orientation via summarized assessment of economic policies and agreements pre and post 2008:

**Table 5.1 Comparison of Pre and Post 2008 Economic Policies and Agreements**

Source: (MoCoM, n.d; Khan, 2023, Kiani, 2021, MoEA, n.d)

<b>Region/Country Category</b>	<b>Pre-2008 Economic Policies and Agreements</b>	<b>Post-2008 Economic Policies and Agreements</b>
<b>Major Countries (USA, Russia, China)</b>	Security-focused relations with the USA and minimal economic engagement with Russia and China - Limited trade and investment agreements reflecting geopolitical alliances	Enhanced economic engagement with China through CPEC; fostering of trade and technology investment with the USA - Increased economic cooperation with Russia, particularly in energy sector
<b>Neighboring Countries (India, Afghanistan, Iran etc.)</b>	Geopolitical tensions overshadowing economic agreements - Limited trade and transit agreements, hindered by security concerns	Efforts towards economic integration and improved connectivity, though impacted by security and political challenges - Emphasis on regional trade, energy and transit agreements
<b>Muslim World (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, etc.)</b>	Strategic security alliances dominating economic engagements - Limited economic cooperation beyond labor and resource sectors	Shift towards diversified economic partnerships, focusing on investments and trade in various sectors - Enhanced cooperation in areas such as energy and infrastructure

Pakistan's transition towards a geo-economic approach in its foreign policy has led to a substantial reorientation of its economic policies, trade agreements, and investment strategies. These changes, guided by the principles of neo-liberalism, signify a focus on

economic interdependence, regional connectivity, and market integration as pivotal components of Pakistan's national strategy. The transition from geo-politics to geo-economics in Pakistan has profoundly influenced its foreign policy (as shown by economic policies and agreements in this section), marked by a strategic shift towards economic growth, globalization, and regional integration.

Overall, this chapter examined the impact of the geo-economic shift in Pakistan's foreign policy. It has been analyzed that the emphasis on economic relations has been a priority and has had a significant impact, although occasionally, geopolitical factors have hindered its full potential. Pakistan's strategic realignment towards a geo-economic approach in foreign policy has left an indelible mark, fostering economic interdependence, nurturing regional connectivity, and fostering market integration. This reorientation aligned Pakistan's strategies with global economic trends, leveraging heightened economic cooperation and globalization as it positions itself on the global stage. Through these deliberated moves, Pakistan aimed to cement its position by harnessing the potential of economic collaboration and embracing the spirit of global economic evolution.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Imperatives, Constraints and Potentials: Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics of Pakistan**

This chapter explored the nexus between geopolitical and geo-economic aspects of Pakistan, in the context of the mutual influence amongst the imperatives, constraints and potentials inherent in neighboring countries, Muslim countries and major countries with respect to neo-liberal idea.

#### **6.1 Overview**

In this chapter of the dissertation, the geopolitics and geo-economics were examined, which assessed the national imperatives, constraints, and potentials those remained the basis of Pakistan's foreign policy for the optimal attainment of geo-economic fruits. Within the context of neoliberalism, treaties, agreements, and their functionalities are viewed as essential elements of an international system, which urges the interdependence of states and their future cooperation (Keohane & Nye, 2011). This chapter propounded that Pakistan's geopolitical and geo-economic contributions remained invaluable of wider web of engagements, which drew upon the idea of complex interdependence under the lens of neo-liberalism (Axelrod & Keohane, 1984). So, it helped understanding the national endeavors, limitations and possibilities.

National imperatives in short refer to those pillars those have been recognized as crucial to the development or rather prosperity of a state. They might involve elements pertaining to defense, borders, economic progress, climate change and regional influence (Haque, 2023). Constraints have been characterized by factors that may hinder the country

to achieve its imperatives or objectives. It may be the outcome of a variety of different factors, such as instable politics, financial loopholes and external actors (Jakobson, 2023). While, potentials are the possibilities and opportunities that can be leveraged to overcome its constraints and achieve its imperatives, that the country needs to cross in order to prosper (Putz, 2023).

The reason why this chapter has been penned is to shed light on the interaction mechanisms that took place between the requirements, hurdles and prospects that unfold across geopolitics and geo-economics' interplay. Further, this chapter tried to understand, the Pakistan's relation with the major countries, neighboring states, and the Muslim countries and groups with respect to imperatives, constraints and potentials have been influenced.

In a similar vein, it sought to investigate the Pakistan's constraints; whether in terms of policy options, economic reliance, or diplomatic flexibility and opportunities for Pakistan to advance towards its national goals. By perceiving these tendencies and recognizing the factors thereof, the role of Pakistan in terms of foreign policy making and strategic planning was better understood, and likewise, its future course of action was assessed. Consequently, this chapter helped in promoting our knowledge of Pakistan's foreign policy greatly.

The neo-liberal rhetoric acknowledges the interconnection of states and the growing complexity of international relations in the age of globalization (Keohane & Nye, 1998). By using this perspective, foreign policy of Pakistan have been comprehended better to utilize international institutions, norms, and its relations with other states to further its goals, work around its limitations, and realize its potential. This study guided efforts to

forge alliances, conduct multilateral diplomacy, and develop collaborative solutions to common problems (Ikenberry, 2011). It also provided ways for Pakistan to become more fully integrated into the international community, utilizing interdependence to produce mutual benefits and create a more cooperative, peaceful world order by optimum decision-making. It remained crucial for Pakistan's foreign policy development to comprehend how geopolitics and geo-economics interacted while taking into account national imperatives, constraints, and potentials.

## **6.2 National Imperatives in the Context of Geo-Politics and Geo-Economics**

The interplay between geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy, which is of particular relevance to economic growth and sustainability, has been seen as a most crucial field of analysis. This study examined how national imperatives shape Pakistan's geo-political and geo-economic landscape.

The implementation of measures of money supply management, and exchange rates, as well as maintaining stability of prices levels is significant for the country's successful growth. The monetary policy of a state, acting mainly to retain inflation at moderate level, and to ensure a reliable supply of currency is indeed central to the stability of economy over both short term and long term (Mansoor et al., 2018). Similarly, the banking sector performances also played important role in Pakistan economic growth. Investment in these areas was able to come up with policies that helped increase growth through attaining stability in the long run, this illustrated how the economic systems are connected with the political health indicated by Khan et al., 2018.

FDIs, capital inflows, enhanced trading and commerce, liberalization of economic activities with regulatory government are among top imperative in geo-economics realm.

Whereas, cooperation among states and mitigation of the issues peacefully for the sake of prosperity are inevitable imperatives for the prosperity of region in geo-political domain. Political equilibrium especially the absence on violence or war contributed vastly when it came to economic growth in Pakistan. A bi-directional relation between stability and growth emphasized the fact that the first ingredient for economic growth is a stable political environment (Javed et al., 2018). If policy makers want to work on bringing progress and prosperity among people, they should go for skills development and entrepreneurial activity. These zones rather constitute the backbone of the Pakistan's economy which are interrelated with their foreign policy (Shabbir et al., 2018).

Though, energy consumption including from sustainable sources remained important for economic development in Pakistan but it required to be fulfilled in a sustainable way. The choice of energy consumption is not only supportive of geo-economic strategies but also as it implies that successful economic development critically relies on energy security (Chandio et al., 2019). Urbanization contributes positively to human development in Pakistan, while economic growth alone does not suffice. This underscores the need for urban development policies that support human welfare and economic growth (Khan et al., 2018). Pakistan's agricultural exports are governed by a wide variety of pertinent factors, such as bilateral exchange rates, tariff rates, and trading agreements. Through neighboring, additional, Middle East and European, marketing of agricultural products, trade policy emphasize appropriate foreign trade policies (Atif et al., 2017).

The long-standing tension between India and Pakistan has been a significant factor in Pakistan's security policies. These tensions, often escalating to military confrontations, have necessitated substantial defense spending and a focus on military preparedness. The

relationship with India influences Pakistan's foreign policy priorities, including alliances and defense collaborations (Perkovich, 1996). It becomes imperative to solve the longstanding issues with the consultation of all stakeholders.

Pakistan's security environment is shaped by its role in regional conflicts, including the war in Afghanistan and disputes with India. The political and strategic situation directly influences its external policy, such as the adoption of NATO and co-operation with the countries in the region (HM, 2023). Fighting terrorism has been an important part of Pakistan's foreign policy agenda and has a direct impact on the country's ties with its allies (Khan et al., 2021). It becomes imperative to be revisited with cooperation and consultation of all stakeholders.

The economy-state security is proportional because of the inseparable connection between the two. Security is an essential factor in decisions pertaining to economic policies, such as trade pacts and foreign investment. Pakistan's contribution into projects like CPEC can be seen from two points of view, both of these aspects being strengthened, firstly, economically, and then, strategic stability (Gul et al., 2021). Non-traditional security threats come up with disastrous diseases and climate change for Pakistan which being matter of concern need to be dealt with joint cooperation of governments, private and non-governmental organizations. They can affect not just the national security but also the foreign policy as well (Liaqut et al., 2021). Proactive responses to the threats are imperatives.

The security and defense face of Pakistan result from the conjunction of these factors: regional confrontations, global geopolitical shifts, and internal security issues. The neo-liberal trend placing emphasis on interdependence, cooperation among the nations and

social order proved to be the mean of analyzing and its influence on the foreign policy of Pakistan. In face of geo-politics and geo-economics, national agenda for Pakistan, and consequently, gaining more influence on the region has recently become an important aim. This goal is centered on both the old security problems but more of the economic interests with the specificities the collective security and economic interests among states of modern global dynamics, viewed with neo-liberalism.

### **6.3 Constraints in Geo-Political and Geo-Economic Strategies**

As to Pakistani's geo-political and geo- economic approaches economic strain like foreign aid, debt, and trade deficits have been large restraining factors; elaborating these constraints under the neo-liberalism perspective, highlights the interdependence of states and markets, reveals the manner by which these obstruct Pakistan's external policy.

Upon discussion with the Ambassador Maj Gen Muhammad Saad Khattak (retd)<sup>1</sup>, he highlighted:

*‘Several barriers hinder Pakistan’s ability to fully utilize its geo-economic contours to enhance its geopolitical influence and overall prosperity. Firstly, security concerns and regional instability, including domestic terrorism and tensions with neighboring countries like India and Afghanistan, impede Pakistan's efforts to capitalize on its geo-economic advantages. Secondly, political instability and conflicts further deter potential investors and hinder trade opportunities. Thirdly, inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation networks, energy facilities, and ports, constrains Pakistan's ability to facilitate trade and leverage its strategic location, increasing transaction costs and diminishing its*

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Ambassador Maj Gen Muhammad Saad Khattak (retd), Ambassador of Pakistan to Sri Lanka, conducted via phone, March 7, 2024.

*attractiveness as a transit hub. Fourthly, persistent economic challenges, including high inflation, fiscal deficits, unemployment, and governance issues such as corruption, hinder Pakistan's attractiveness as an investment destination and hinder the implementation of policies aimed at leveraging geo-economic advantages. Fifthly, water scarcity and environmental degradation pose socio-economic challenges.'*

(Khattak, M. S., Interview, March 7, 2024)

Pakistan's reliance on foreign aid has been a critical economic limitation. This dependency often comes with conditions that influence domestic policies and foreign relations, affecting sovereignty and policy autonomy (Khan, 2015). Moreover, the increasing levels of debt significantly affect Pakistan's economic stability. International trade, total debt servicing, and broad money supply have a substantial impact on fiscal deficits in both short and long runs (Kalim & Hassan, 2013). Additionally, Persistent trade deficits result in foreign debts and negatively influence Pakistan's GDP. The trade deficit has a harmful impact, underlining the need for policies that capitalize on Pakistan's low-cost resources and skilled population to boost exports and reduce dependency on imports (Safdar et al., 2021).

In a detailed conversation, Mr. Abdullah Khan<sup>2</sup>, Managing Director at the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), an esteemed Islamabad-based think tank, shared that:

*'Pakistan's over reliance on loans to manage its economy. Loans have literally deprived us from our economic sovereignty. IMF dictates economic policies, which is more*

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Mr. Abdullah Khan, Managing Director, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, on March 18, 2024.

*interested in using loans as strategic coercion tool than helping grow or improve our economy. IMF policies are based on increasing taxes and duties mostly on energy products, which results in increasing cost of production. As a result our local industry is strangled'*

(Khan, A., Interview, March 18, 2024)

Issues like fiscal deficits, capital flight, decreased foreign direct investment, and increasing trade deficits weaken Pakistan's economy. These challenges have led to aid and debt dependency, further constraining Pakistan's economic growth (Khan, 2015). Foreign exchange constraints have been a major factor in Pakistan's reduced growth cycles. These constraints limit the country's ability to sustain economic growth and engage effectively in international trade (Amjad, 2014).

The level of public debt for economic growth in Pakistan is estimated to be around 60% of GDP. Higher levels of debt, coupled with increasing interest rates, significantly curb economic growth and constrain the country's economic policies (Ashfaq & Padda, 2019). Foreign debt servicing significantly and adversely affects Pakistan's per capita income growth rate, both in the short-run and long-run. This indicates that debt servicing is a major constraint on the country's economic prosperity (Jadoon, Batool, & Mehmood, 2014).

The CPEC along with its benefits faces some risks including upsurges in political instability, debt management and geopolitical disputes. These challenges need to be addressed to fully capitalize on the corridor's potential (Khan & Liu, 2019). Economic factors like devaluation and high real interest rates, along with non-economic factors such

as internal and external shocks, have led to the collapse of private investment in Pakistan. This situation exacerbates the constraints on economic growth (Hyder & Ahmed, 2003).

During conversation, Mr. Umer Wayn<sup>3</sup>, a seasoned banker, the Senior Vice President and Department Head at Muslim Commercial Bank, Pakistan, shared his experienced views on the barriers to large-scale economic initiatives. He stated:

*"The primary challenge we face is the sheer lack of funding for significant projects, which is a fundamental obstacle to development. Furthermore, we frequently encounter complications arising from international disagreements, where countries may not see eye-to-eye, leading to project delays or cancellations. The regulatory environment also plays a critical role, with stringent rules and laws making business operations increasingly difficult. Additionally, the state of our infrastructure, particularly in terms of roads and railways, is far from adequate for supporting the efficient movement of goods. Lastly, the skills gap and educational deficiencies in our workforce significantly hinder our capacity for engaging in larger economic activities."*

(Wyne, U., Interview, March 16, 2024)

These economic limitations highlight the need for Pakistan to develop robust economic policies that reduce dependency on foreign aid, manage debt sustainably, and address trade deficits. Doing so is crucial for enhancing the country's ability to implement effective geo-political and geo-economic strategies in a globalized world.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Mr. Umer Wayn, Senior Vice President/Department Head at Muslim Commercial Bank, Pakistan, on March 16, 2024.

In an insightful discussion, Dr. Ejaz Hussain<sup>4</sup>, Associate Professor at Lahore School of Economics, shared his expert analysis on the critical constraints affecting the country's progress. He stated,

*"The specter of political instability at home stands as a significant barrier to our development, further exacerbated by the elite's capture of economic policy and resources. This monopolization by the elite not only stifles equitable growth but also entrenches economic and political disparities. Additionally, our regional economic dependency, particularly on China, and global economic dependency on entities like the IMF and the US, pose challenges to our autonomy and flexibility in economic decisions. Such dependencies limit our capacity to pursue independent economic policies and adapt to global economic shifts."*

(Hussain, E., Interview, March 20, 2024)

Political instability within Pakistan has been a significant constraint on its geo-political and geo-economic strategies. This instability encompasses a range of factors, including security, governance challenges, and economic fluctuations, all of which influence the country's ability to effectively implement and sustain foreign policies. Analyzing these dynamics through the neo-liberalism theoretical framework, which emphasizes the interplay between political stability and economic interdependence, provides a comprehensive understanding of their impact on Pakistan's strategic positioning (Tabassam et al, 2016).

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Dr. Ejaz Hussain, Associate Professor, Lahore School of Economics, on March 20, 2024.

In a candid conversation, Mr. Muhammad Imran Khan Khattak<sup>5</sup>, an Accounts Officer at the Military Accountant General's office, Ministry of Defense, Pakistan, provided a thorough analysis of the nation's pressing challenges. He remarked,

*"Our nation faces a unique set of constraints, primarily stemming from a 'hostile neighborhood due to ongoing conflicts on jurisdictional basis,' which exacerbates both our internal and external security challenges. Additionally, 'weak governance and rampant corruption' undermine our efforts to build a resilient and equitable society. The 'lack of long-term policies' and 'leadership' further hinders our ability to address these challenges effectively and to chart a path towards sustainable development and stability."*

(Khattak, M, I, K., Interview, March 20, 2024)

Security instability, notably insurgency and terror incidents, has a significant negative effect on Pakistan's economic growth. This instability undermines investor confidence and disrupts economic activities, leading to slower growth and development (Tabassam et al, 2016). Security instability reduces investment and slows economic development, contributing to budget deficits. This situation limits the government's ability to finance development projects and engage in foreign economic relations effectively (Mushtaq et al., 2017).

Political instability and economic uncertainty exacerbate Pakistan's debt challenges, necessitating immediate fiscal and public policy adjustments. This instability affects the country's ability to manage its debt sustainably and negotiate favorable terms with international lenders (Sikandar & Wahid, 2019). The negative relationship between

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Mr. Muhammad Imran Khan Khattak, Accounts Officer, Military Accountant General, Ministry of Defense, Pakistan, on March 21, 2024.

political instability and economic growth weakens Pakistan's economic standing. A stable political environment is essential for fostering growth and strengthening political stability (Nawaz et al., 2021).

Political instability and emergency in economic policies increase the debt issues; if we want to see these through; the needed solutions are the fiscal adjustments and the public policies as well. The deteriorating fiscal stability of the country increases the difficulty in building debt equitably and coming into a contract with international creditors (Sikandar & Wahid, 2019). The unstable nature of politics along with the economic growth leads to a negative impact on Pakistan's economic health. Political unrest is an inescapable factor to healthy growth and political stability (Nawaz et al., 2021).

Political instability in Pakistan remains the main precondition hindering efforts in building of its geopolitics and geo-economy. This is the area that brings macroeconomic instability, which in turn has an impact on the space of economic growth, financial development, investment, trade and environmental policies. Shifting these obstacles is of great importance for Pakistan for itself to be able to participate in the nuances of the prevailing regional and global political and economic playing fields.

The scenario of Pakistani foreign policy in the aspect of international isolation, relationships and sanctions presents an intricate landscape where players can be seen affected by varying factors, including security matters, nuclear program, regional boundaries and international diplomatic relations. The examination of these elements of Pakistan's economy from a neo-liberalism perspective, with emphasis on economic interdependence and the roles of international institutions, provides with an understanding of the bottleneck and the probable economic issues in the process.

This isolation has been magnified by the ongoing political instability, regional handicap, and the popularity of the Kashmir freedom struggle, influencing the formulation of Pakistan's foreign policy (Ali et al., 2019) India's strategic actions, including military operations and airstrikes, aim to alter the status quo in India-Pakistan relations. Along, manipulation in FATF, these actions have been instrumental in Pakistan's diplomatic isolation, particularly in the context of terrorism (Kaur 2020).

The engagements of great powers like China and US as well as regional matters that include cross-border terrorism and intricacy of India- Afghanistan relations affect the security of Pakistan and its foreign policy (Gul et al., 2021). The magnification of sectarian hatred with the financial contribution of the countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran became a detrimental factor for Pakistan's foreign policy, and continues to undermine its peace aims (Abbas & Syed, 2020).

Pakistan's foreign policy has been faced constrained by international isolation, strained relationships particularly with neighbors, and low efficiency in balancing the relations. These challenges analyzed, underscore the complex interdependence of balancing national security interests with economic and diplomatic engagement in a globally interconnected environment.

#### **6.4 Potentials in Geo-Political and Geo-Economic Realms**

Emerging markets and trade relations present significant economic benefits for Pakistan, which emphasizes the importance of global trade and economic interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Various factors have contributed to shaping Pakistan's potential

in these areas. While taking interview of Ambassador Maj Gen Muhammad Saad Khattak (retd)<sup>6</sup>, he emphasized the potentials and deliberated that:

*'Pakistan has significant opportunities to align its geopolitical and geo-economic strategies for better global integration. Participation and implementation of initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) presents avenues for enhancing connectivity and trade integration, while regional economic cooperation through platforms like ECO, SCO can foster stability and prosperity. Leveraging its strategic location as an energy corridor and maritime hub, Pakistan can promote energy cooperation, maritime connectivity, and diversification of economic partnerships, engaging with emerging economies and global players. Embracing technology, innovation, and sustainable development initiatives can further enhance Pakistan's competitiveness and resilience, positioning it as a key player in the global arena. Adoption of fintech solutions and digital payments can improve financial inclusion and transparency, while leveraging artificial intelligence and data analytics enhances decision-making and productivity in key sectors like healthcare and agriculture. Smart city initiatives and sustainable development projects improve urban planning and resource management, attracting investment and talent.'*

(Khattak, M. S., Interview, March 7, 2024)

Pakistan's integration into the global economy through international trade and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) positively affects its economic growth (SIFC, 2024). This relationship is particularly crucial in the context of emerging markets, where trade

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Ambassador Maj Gen Muhammad Saad Khattak (retd), Ambassador of Pakistan to Sri Lanka, conducted via phone, March 7, 2024.

liberalization can enhance Pakistan's economic prospects (Ali & Xia-ling, 2017). SAFTA presents net export benefits for Pakistan's economy, particularly in expanding the demand for products like Basmati Rice, leather, and cotton-made garments. This agreement can boost Pakistan's trade within the region, contributing to economic growth (Khosro et al., 2010). An FTA between Pakistan and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is expected to increase bilateral trade significantly, promoting sustainable growth. This agreement can expand Pakistan's economic ties with major Asian economies (Akram et al., 2020).

In an insightful discussion, Salman Cheema<sup>7</sup>, a Chartered Accountant and Economist at Deloitte, Ireland, offered his perspective on enhancing economic potentials. He stated,

*"The key to bolstering Pakistan's economic landscape lies in 'making better economic ties with neighboring countries and exploring partnerships' through Regional Trade Agreements. Moreover, 'improving ports, roads, and railways' is crucial to 'make trade easier' and foster Improved Trade Routes. Enhancing connectivity goes beyond physical infrastructure; it's about 'using technology to improve communication and trade,' thereby ensuring 'Better Connectivity'. Lastly, the essence of forging ahead in the global economy rests on our ability to practice 'Economic Diplomacy,' which involves 'strengthening relationships with other countries.' These strategies combined can significantly elevate our position in the international arena."*

(Cheema, S., Interview, March 22, 2024)

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Salman Cheema, Chartered Accountant and Economist, Deloitte, Ireland, on March 22, 2024.

Pakistan has high trade potential with countries across various regions, including Asia-Pacific, the European Union, the Middle East, Latin America, and North America. Exploiting this potential can enhance Pakistan's role in global trade (Gul & Yasin, 2011). Pakistan's trade with the EU reached among highest, with the country benefitting from the EU's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) (Soomro & Ansari, 2022). It sets example of high potential with other regions as well.

Pakistan has the potential to enhance bilateral trade with nearly 102 countries, with the highest potential lying with countries like Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Somalia, Hong Kong, Iran, and the USA whereas actual trade has exceeded with countries like China, Oman, Spain, UAE, Germany, and the UK. Capitalizing on these opportunities can significantly boost Pakistan's global trade (Irshad & Anwar, 2019). Investment from China in Pakistan, particularly through CPEC, shows a commitment to improving economic content, including trade, investment, and energy cooperation. This partnership is crucial for Pakistan's economic growth (Khan & Liu, 2019).

In a compelling conversation, Mr. Syed Tayyib Shah<sup>8</sup>, Deputy Director at the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), provided a forward-looking analysis on enhancing regional stability and connectivity. He remarked,

*"Achieving economic stability and resolving regional conflicts with Afghanistan, India, and Iran are paramount. These efforts lay the groundwork for broader regional connectivity and cooperation.. Furthermore, the expansion of online businesses and services presents a significant opportunity for economic diversification and resilience.*

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Mr. Syed Tayyib Shah, Deputy Director, National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), on March 23, 2024.

*Embracing these initiatives can propel us toward a more stable and interconnected region."*

(Shah. T.S., Interview, March 23, 2024)

Liberalizing trade with India could benefit certain Pakistani industries, indicating the potential for improved bilateral economic relations (Khan & Kakar, 2023). Economic size, distance, political globalization, and economic integration are significant factors impacting Pakistan's trade potential with global partners. Leveraging these factors can enhance Pakistan's trade potential (Siddique, Quddus, & Iqbal, 2022). The integration of Pakistan's stock market with its trading partners decreased after the 2008 financial crisis, indicating the need for economic policies that enhance financial stability and integration to uncap vast potential (Lee et al., 2024; Joyo & Lefen, 2019).

Trade with China and ASEAN countries is growing rapidly, although exports are still lacking. Enhancing exports is crucial for Pakistan to fully benefit from these agreements and take advantage of the opportunity (Uroos, 2021; Kamal et al., 2020; Kamal & Malik, 2017). CPEC infrastructure projects are expected to significantly improve residents' quality of life through job openings and poverty reduction, contributing to overall community wellbeing (Afzal & Naseem, 2018).

Tourism in Pakistan offers potential economic growth opportunities. Developing tourism destinations can attract international investors and generate higher income, aiding in regional development (Khan et al., 2024). The economic development of Balochistan, independent of CPEC, can benefit from its mineral resources and potential regional

economic integration. Developing this region can enhance Pakistan's economic landscape (Khetran & Saeed, 2017).

Pursuing energy security through alternative and renewable energy sources, independent of CPEC projects, can provide Pakistan with long-term economic benefits and contribute to environmental sustainability (Sahir & Qureshi, 2007). Deep integration with SAARC and other regional and international organizations could enable Pakistan to develop rapidly in sectors like engineering, contributing to regional economic growth and stability (Williamson, 1999).

Enhancing agricultural exports by capitalizing on Pakistan's low-cost resources and skilled population can reduce trade deficits and dependency on imports, bolstering the economy (Atif, Hai-yun, & Mahmood, 2017). Diversifying trade partners and exploring new markets in regions like Central Asia and Europe can create additional economic opportunities for Pakistan, reducing its reliance on traditional economic partners (Kaura, 2020). Exploring regional connectivity projects outside of CPEC, such as transport and communication networks with neighboring countries, can enhance regional trade and economic cooperation (Fozia, Yousaf, & Ashraf, 2019).

In discussing the potential for growth and innovation, Mr. Adeel Mirza<sup>9</sup>, a Chartered Accountant and Founding & Audit Partner at Qasim & Adeel Co. Chartered Accountancy Firm, highlighted that:

*'The effective utilization of big data and analytics can provide valuable potentials for decision-making and policy formulation. By leveraging data-driven approaches,*

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Mr. Adeel Mirza, Chartered Accountant and Founding & Audit Partner at Qasim & Adeel Co. Chartered Accountancy Firm, on March 17, 2024.

*Pakistan can optimize resource allocation, enhance productivity, and address socio-economic challenges more effectively, thereby improving its overall competitiveness and resilience. Along, transitioning towards a knowledge-based economy driven by digital innovation and intellectual capital presents great potentials for Pakistan's long-term economic sustainability. Investing in education, research infrastructure, and human capital development can cultivate a skilled workforce capable of driving technological advancements and creating value-added products and services.'*

(Mirza, A., Interview, March 17, 2024)

The IT and services sector in Pakistan presents considerable growth opportunities. Emphasizing this sector can lead to substantial economic gains, attracting foreign investment, and creating job opportunities (State Bank of Pakistan, 2023). The energy sector, particularly renewable energy, offers potential for economic growth. Investing in renewable energy projects can enhance energy security and provide sustainable economic benefits (Chou, Ngo, & Tran, 2023).

During engaging conversation, Mr. Ayaz Shah<sup>10</sup>, a renowned religious scholar and the Director of Public Relations and External Affairs at Jamia Tur Rasheed, provided a comprehensive overview of several key areas poised for significant growth and transformation. He remarked:

*"In the realm of Digital Transformation and E-commerce, we're on the brink of a revolution that will fundamentally alter how we conduct business and interact with the digital world. Similarly, the advancements in Information and Communication Technology*

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Mr. Ayaz Shah, a renowned Religious Scholar and Director of Public Relations and External Affairs, Jamia Tur Rasheed, on March 19, 2024.

*(ICT) Infrastructure are laying the groundwork for a more connected and efficient future. With regards to Fintech and Digital Payments, the shift towards digital finance is accelerating, making transactions faster, safer, and more accessible to a broader audience. Moreover, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Industry 4.0 technologies is set to redefine the boundaries of innovation, driving unprecedented efficiency and productivity across sectors. Lastly, the focus on Renewable Energy and Sustainability is not just an environmental imperative but also an economic opportunity, as it promises to lead us towards a more sustainable and energy-secure future. Along, maintain a balanced foreign policy approach that prioritizes national interests, promotes peace and stability in the region, and seeks to resolve conflicts through dialogue, diplomacy, and multilateral engagement. Avoid entanglements that could undermine Pakistan's credibility or economic prospects."*

(Shah, A., Interview, March 19, 2024)

The manufacturing sector in Pakistan has the potential for growth and modernization. By focusing on high-value-added products and leveraging global supply chains, Pakistan can enhance its economic stability and global trade position (Iftikhar & Hossain, 2020). Attracting FDI in various sectors, including mining, manufacturing, and services, can stimulate economic growth. Policies have been created for conducive environment for FDI can lead to technology transfer and skill development (SIFC, 2024; Gill, 2019). SMEs are crucial for economic development. Supporting SMEs through policy initiatives and access to finance can stimulate economic growth and job creation (Bahoo et al., 2018).

The establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in Pakistan presents promising geo-economic potentials, particularly in enhancing foreign direct investments from regions like the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (SIFC, 2024). By focusing on key sectors such as defense production, agriculture, energy, information technology, and mining, the SIFC aims to revitalize Pakistan's economic landscape and stimulate substantial economic growth (Siddiqi, 2023).

. Harnessing these potentials requires strategic planning, investment, and international cooperation, guided by the principles of neo-liberalism emphasizing economic integration and global market dynamics.

Diversifying strategic partnerships beyond traditional allies is crucial for Pakistan. Engaging with emerging powers like Russia and regional entities like ASEAN and the European Union can enhance Pakistan's geo-economic and geopolitical positioning, offering opportunities for trade, investment, and political support (Yusuf & Akhtar, 2023). During an interview, Ms. Romina Khursheed Alam<sup>11</sup>, a Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan, articulated the importance of leveraging diaspora networks and smart lobbying in influential countries to bolster Pakistan's economic ties. She specifically noted:

*‘Diaspora engagement in all potent countries and triggering lobbies smartly to engage in economic relations particularly via SIFC, present great opportunities for Pakistan. Activate press attaches of Pakistan in embassies abroad to portray the high potentials of Pakistan for all type of economic relations for collective advantage of the*

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Ms. Romina Khursheed Alam, Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan on 14 March 2023. Currently, holding Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Climate Change and former Convener of the National Parliamentary Taskforce on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

*stakeholders. International chairs abroad may be of great help in persuading potent actors for flourishing geo-economic relations”*

(Alam R.K., Interview, March 14, 2024)

Pakistan's geo-economic strategy can avail full potential by economic diplomacy and lobbying to foster regional integration, attract foreign investment, and secure trade partnerships. By engaging in strategic partnerships and lobbying efforts, Pakistan can address macroeconomic challenges, stimulate growth, and position itself as a pivotal player in regional trade (Nawab, 2023; Express Tribune, 2023).

Strengthening ties with GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar, can provide Pakistan with vital economic benefits. These partnerships can lead to increased investment, enhanced energy security, and greater employment opportunities for Pakistani nationals in the Gulf region (MoIB, 2023).

Developing economic and energy corridors with neighboring countries like Iran and Afghanistan can open up new avenues for trade and energy transit. These corridors can boost Pakistan's economic prospects and solidify its role as a key regional player (Rajmil et al., 2021). Despite ups and downs, a strategic and economic partnership with the United States offers potential advantages, including access to advanced technology and support in international forums. Navigating this relationship effectively is key to maximizing its benefits (Ullah, 2021).

Engaging in regional security and peace initiatives, particularly in Afghanistan, can enhance Pakistan's regional standing. It can also create a conducive environment for economic development and regional cooperation (Weinbaum & Harder, 2008). Improving

relations with India, despite the challenges, can unlock economic and trade potentials. Peaceful coexistence and resolution of longstanding disputes like Kashmir can lead to regional stability and economic prosperity (Bhatti et al., 2019).

Pakistan's potential advantages in diplomatic and economic partnerships encompass a range of opportunities in economic, security, and political domains. Leveraging these partnerships effectively requires a balanced approach, aligning national interests with global economic trends and regional dynamics. Pakistan's geo-economic potentials have been shaped by various factors, including strategic partnerships, regional dynamics, internal political stability, and global economic trends. These factors, analyzed through a neo-liberalism lens, underscore the importance of economic interdependence, international cooperation, and the strategic use of Pakistan's geographic position.

### **6.5 The interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics considering the national imperatives, constraints and potentials with Major Powers**

In this section, the study examined the complicated combination of geo-politics and geo-economics from the Pakistan's perspective, with specific references to imperatives, constraints and potentials with the major-powers namely, the United States, China and Russia. The prism of neo-liberalism presents how emerging external factors are confronting Pakistan in terms of national requirements, where, in addition, it explains the hurdles the country faces alongside indicating the gains that are available for the country to pick. Moreover, the optimum interplay of imperatives, constraints and potentials is also analyzed that would help the decision makers onwards.

### **6.5.1 United States**

In the sphere of international affairs and most notably the major powers that stand out and most specifically the United States case. Not surprisingly, what the United States and Pakistan want from each other, how much leverage each side has on the other, and what sources of conflict lie between them during relationship have large implications.

Pakistan's vital national imperatives encompass a number of requirements concerning economic assistance, security cooperation, and diplomatic affairs within international organizations (Bashir, et al, 2023). Such requisites have found considerable significance for Pakistan's national security, economic development and international reputation because of the influence of the USA globally (Bashir & Aman, 2021).

While the U.S. affinity with Pakistan has some strait jackets, it has incontestable strategic significance. These include diverging interests in the region, especially in relation to Afghanistan and India, along with domestic pressures in both countries influencing foreign policy decisions (Haqqani, 2013). Constraint is the U.S. aid who's imposition of strings conditions serve the purpose of limiting Pakistani choices in the process of policy making. This is a clear example of the neo-liberal approach that focuses on the discipline imposed by economic interdependent relationships; this, in itself, is ingrained with some complex interdependence dynamics. (Harvey, 2007).

Despite the overall challenges, several opportunities still remain untapped yet can be utilized for the mutual benefit of both sides. The USA is a key investor of FDI for Pakistan and there are also trading and technological cooperation areas (Rehman et al., 2021). On the other hand, there is a way for invention of new techniques of cooperation between both agriculture and mining as the case where mutual benefits are similar. The

capitalist and neo-liberalist template in this case foresees that co-operation is at least possible when interests just coincide and shared benefits are created through norms, institutions and practices (Keohane & Nye, 2011). As such, through effective diplomacy, Pakistan can leverage these potentials, work around the constraints, and serve its national imperatives in relation to the United States.

In the neo-liberal framework, optimal outcomes are derived from cooperative behavior within an interdependent international system (Keohane & Nye, 1998). To achieve optimum interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics in the relationship with the United States, Pakistan needs to leverage the principles of mutual interest, cooperation and diplomacy.

Firstly, it is essential for Pakistan to identify areas of mutual interest that can create a solid foundation for cooperation. Counter-terrorism efforts and regional stability, particularly concerning Afghanistan, have traditionally been areas of shared threats those needs to be neutralized (Haqqani, 2013). Expanding these areas of collaboration, for instance, into climate change, cyber security, or global health, could further entrench cooperation (Khan, 2024).

Secondly, Pakistan may work towards diversifying its economic relationship with the U.S. The current relationship is heavily weighted towards aid. Shifting towards a relationship based on trade and investment can provide a more stable and sustainable economic foundation (Afzal, 2023). Increased U.S. investment in Pakistan's key sectors like technology, energy, mining and manufacturing could help stimulate economic growth and development (SIFC, 2024).

Thirdly, effective diplomacy is crucial. Neo-liberalism emphasizes the role of international norms and institutions in facilitating cooperation (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985). Pakistan should leverage its position in international organizations, such as the United Nations, to build consensus with the U.S. on crucial issues. Engaging in track two diplomacy, cultural exchange programs, and collaborative research and development initiatives can also foster mutual understanding and goodwill (MoFA, 2024a).

Moreover, to deal with the constraints in its relationship with the U.S., Pakistan needs to adopt a balanced foreign policy approach. This would entail diversifying its foreign relations and reducing over-reliance on any single major power. This balanced approach would give Pakistan greater diplomatic maneuverability and resilience in managing its foreign relations. By adopting these strategies, Pakistan can ensure an optimum interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics with the United States, aligning with the principles of neo-liberalism, fostering cooperation, and pursuing mutual gains in an interdependent world.

### **6.5.2 Russia**

The dynamics of Pakistan-Russia relations are influenced by the historical context, contemporary geopolitical realities, and mutual economic potentials (Clary, 2022). Applying the neo-liberal framework helps to decipher these interplays with an emphasis on the prospects of cooperation, norms, and multilateral engagement.

Pakistan's national imperatives regarding Russia include diversifying its strategic alliances, gaining access to Russian military technology, and improving economic ties (Khan, 2021). Given the changing international power structures, Pakistan seeks to build relationships beyond traditional allies, including Russia. Advanced defense technology of

Russia, particularly its air defense systems and military aircraft, are of great interest to Pakistan. Economically, cooperation with Russia provides Pakistan access to potential energy cooperation through Central Asian markets, particularly regarding natural gas (Clary, 2022).

Despite the shared interests, there are significant constraints on the relationship. Historically, Russia has had strong ties with India, which has impacted its relations with Pakistan (Mahmood et al, 2023). In addition, Pakistan's closeness to the U.S. during the Cold War and its role in Afghanistan have been contentious issues. Economically, bilateral trade remains limited due to lack of connectivity and Russia's concerns over Pakistan's regulatory environment (Clary, 2022).

Potential areas for cooperation exist. Defense collaboration is one of the key areas, with Pakistan showing interest in Russian military hardware. Additionally, Russia's expertise in energy infrastructure can assist Pakistan in meeting its energy needs (Khan, 2021). Moreover, as both countries are part of the SCO, they can work together on regional security and economic integration (Rauf, 2019).

Despite historical constraints, there are significant potentials for enhanced relations between Pakistan and Russia. A neo-liberal perspective underscores the importance of shared interests, institutional cooperation, and normative influences in actualizing these potentials. From a neo-liberal approach, improving the interaction of geopolitics and geoeconomics in ties between Pakistan and Russia entails cultivating shared interests, integrating into institutional frameworks, and promoting cooperative norms (Keohane & Nye, 2000).

First, the neo-liberal school holds that collaboration in areas of common interest can help nations forge positive relationships with one another (Keohane & Nye, 2000). This covers energy, regional security, and defense technology for Pakistan and Russia. It is possible to take advantage of Pakistan's fascination with Russian technology and know-how to develop tighter ties and trust. Russia might therefore be able to enter Pakistan's market and benefit from the country's advantageous location for energy corridors (Khan, 2019-a).

Second, building cooperative relationships depends greatly on institutional integration (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Pakistan and Russia are both members of the SCO, which might serve as a forum for advancing bilateral cooperation. Both nations may advance regional security, connectivity, and economic integration by participating more actively in the SCO, which will be advantageous to both of them as well as the region as a whole (Rauf, 2019).

Thirdly, geo-economic interaction in a globalized world with growing economic interdependence depends on the development of cooperative norms and regulatory convergence (Clary, 2022). Pakistan needs to address Russia's worries about its regulatory environment if it wants to draw in more Russian investment. This might entail putting new regulations into place, increasing transparency, and guaranteeing contract enforcement.

Moreover, Pakistan should maintain positive connections with other major countries to counter-balance its relationship with Russia from a geopolitical standpoint. This would assist Pakistan avoid being overly dependent on one partner in the unstable international political landscape and maintain Pakistan's options.

In order to conclude, encouraging areas of mutual interest, utilizing institutional frameworks like the SCO, promoting regulatory convergence, and upholding a balanced foreign policy are the keys to maximize the interaction of geopolitics and geo-economics between Pakistan and Russia. This strategy is in line with neo-liberal concepts that stress institutional cooperation, interdependence, and the significance of standards in international relations.

### **6.5.3 China**

The neo-liberal perspective offers valuable insights on this dynamic, considering the key role of economic interdependence, international cooperation, and institutional frameworks (Harvey, 2007).

Pakistan's national imperatives vis-a-vis China are broad and encompass political, economic, and security interests (Faisal, 2018). Beijing support the Islamabad's positions as regards to international forums, mainly the Kashmir issue. Economically, Pakistan is still on China as high levels of investment particularly under CPEC. Moreover, among others, China serves as arms trading partner to Pakistan thereby giving a boost to its national security agenda (Garlick, 2021).

The Chinese do have advantages in their relationship with Pakistan but they are not without the constraints either. Financially, there exists a stringent debt situation related to the Chinese investments on part of Pakistan and further this condition is hampered because the Pakistani economy is not ready enough to absorb the huge level of debts inflows represented by these investments (Khan et al., 2020). Regarding the political aspects, this relationship is well-balanced as China is the one to carry most of the lead, meaning that this way Pakistan is quite limited in the possibility of the use of its own policy choices.

Besides, China's relations initiate Pakistan's balancing with other major powers that include the US (Hussain et. al., 2020).

In keeping with these limitations, the relations with China originates a lot of perspectives. The CPEC, a flagship project of Chinese BRI, may create a big shift in the infrastructure and energy strategy of Pakistan thereby accelerating the economic development (Faisal, 2019). Meanwhile in the sphere of geopolitics, China's support adds a significant layer of strategic depth to Pakistan's security architecture especially as to contain India (Garlick, 2021). Beyond that, trade and economic partnership are supplemented by areas like technology transfer, scientific research, and people-to-people ties.

According to the neo-liberal perspective that ought to be favored in the Pakistani-Chinese relations, the sustained alliance leads to the idea of an arrangement that is fair, sustainable, and mutually beneficial (Keohane and Nye, 1998). In furtherance the rules governing the relationships with China, Pakistan extends to be the part of institutional networks associated with the BRI initiative like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), for instance. Thus, Pakistan is able to find more and sustainable ground to enrich its economic cooperation with China (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, 2024).

Economic transformation is vital to Pakistan from the point of view that CPEC can deliver significant benefits to the country. This involves strengthening labor competitiveness, business environment and promoting the transference of technology from China to Pakistan (Business Recorder, 2024a). Development of the reforms discussed above give impetus to the inflow of Chinese capital and render it possible for Chinese funds

to flow into the industries which are able to cover a high level of added value, thus bringing about economic growth enlargement (Arshed et al., 2021).

Pakistan balancing act in an active global diplomacy with its partners for the purpose of over whelming China's influence on the geopolitical stage by simultaneously diversifying its preferences across other major world players and the regions of the world is vital (Thoker & Singh, 2017). Although it is difficult to avoid the presence of China, start engaging in the multinational agreements freed from the shackle of over dependence on Beijing. This will help in achieving not only through the bloc's leading role but also by engaging with other regional players via multilateral organization such as the SCO (Hussain et al., 2020).

Additionally, with people-to-people contacts the core sustaining force in Pakistan-China cooperation is crucial to emphasize on this important element in this cooperation (Afzal & Naseem, 2018). In this way, the endeavors of the two countries towards developing the mutual understanding and goodwill, especially in the area of educational exchanges, cultural diplomacy, and civil society involvement, paves a way to the deeper political and economic ties between the nations (Arshed et al., 2021).

## **6.6 The interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics considering the national imperatives, constraints and potentials with Neighboring Countries**

This part of the analysis looks at the delicately complex facets of geo-politics and geo-economics that underpin Pakistan's spheres of interaction and are part of its neighbourhood relations with India, Afghanistan and Iran (China is already discussed previously in the part of one of major powers) (Ali et al., 2019). This section aimed to analyze imperatives, constraints and potentials, which resulted from the changing

environments. In turn, the study posed optimum interplay scenario of imperatives, constraints and potentials with its multiple strata for Pakistan. This section examined to accommodate a deeper and more in-depth knowledge of these dynamics and their effect on the foreign strategies of Pakistan within the region, be it geopolitical or geo-economic landscape (Dawn, 2021).

### **6.6.1 India**

The relationships between India and Pakistan remained complex. The main imperative of Pakistan's foreign policy has been an attempt to go on an equal footing with India to security, recognition and power within the region (HM, 2023). The neo-liberal concept proposes that these problems are part of a greater whole that can be managed effectively through a collective action that involves cooperation, diplomacy, and engagement (Nye, 1988).

Pakistan-India relationship has had many constraints that have remained anchored in the history. Inter-country relationship has been marred by distrust, animosity, and frequent clashes that have consistently impeded the efforts at cooperative partnership (JC, 2019). Besides, the unresolved issues like Kashmir dispute, terrorism allegations, and numerous water conflicts have also contributed to the addition to hostility. The creation and promotion of various national interpretations of the past as well as the effect of local politics on this process make the scenario even more complicated (Joshi, 2017).

Constraints seem to be putting brakes on the bilateral ties but there are ample opportunities from the two countries. With a view to the trade and investment, bilateral relationship between the two might improve economically due to their close geographical

position and similar economy model (Malik, 2020). Water and energy are interrelated; hence, the deeper cooperation in this area might be useful for both sides.

The diplomatic aspect is immensely important given that if the two countries, Pakistan and India managed to work through their differences regional stability would be enhanced and there would be a common ground for addressing common concerns such as climate change, terrorism, and others (Effendi & Ahmad, 2020). The abilities that are in sync with neo-liberalism believes which focus on collaboration and interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 1998).

Nevertheless, these historical and contemporary limitations are of a magnitude, yet, a neo-liberal perspective reveals many of the opportunities that exist in the Pakistan-India relation (Rashid & Hilali, 2020). By giving weights to collaborative activism, institutional participation, and inter-related interests, both countries might earn meaningful advantages.

Nonetheless, by a neoliberal outlook, the most efficient rhapsody between geopolitics and geo-economics in the context of links between Pakistan and India would like to emphasize cooperation and benefit procurement for both (Keohane & Nye, 2011). These are the bases of which relationships are to be built, this means to push for economic cooperation, utilizing diplomatic approach to address protracted conflict, and working together for difficult tasks (Bashir, 2024).

At first, the most pressing concern is to resolve the conundrum of Kashmir conflict. The conflict is the main cause of the disunity that destroys cooperation in other sectors (Abbas & Khan, 2023). It would be fundamental to reach that through diplomatic way, negotiating communities, nations or both of them in good faith, sincerely wanting to resolve the conflict. Involving multilateral tackling, immediately with the third-party

mediation could be quite sensible given the complexity and sensitivity of the conflict (Ganguly, 2016).

In addition, economic collaboration as fragment of strategy is associated with better results. Trade and investment have a long list of good consequences that still can surpass political instabilities (Malik, 2020). This entails acts like bringing down tariffs, boosting cross-border connections and even initiating bilateral trade agreements (Harvey, 2007). In order to get the community support and prevent the emergence of any negative opposition, it is important to make sure that economic advantage is shared on community levels. Also, collaboration in energy industry, such as gas pipelines and joint power grids, are more beneficial (Khetran, 2022).

Moreover, many problems that almost everyone in the globe are experiencing are to be solved by the combined efforts of the parties involved. This includes problems with; terrorism; water management; climate change; and, quite difficult public health issues (Effendi et al., 2020). Similarly, Pakistan and India may mutually accept and work toward accomplishing these peace goals and get trust from each other while doing so. Pakistan and India possibly can succeed in harnessing their true potential outlook, by involving into a joint effort of collaboration model (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

### **6.6.2 Afghanistan**

Afghanistan, a critical neighbor of Pakistan, presents unique challenges and opportunities in terms of geo-politics and geo-economics. Historically, the tumultuous situation in Afghanistan has been a major source of instability for Pakistan, especially concerning border security and the refugee crisis (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). Yet, the geographical location of Afghanistan, linking Pakistan with energy-rich Central Asia,

offers economic opportunities that Pakistan could capitalize on (Asian Development Bank, n.d.-a). Through the neo-liberal lens, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan can be seen as an intricate balance of managing constraints and harnessing potentials, all while pursuing national imperatives.

The core national imperative for Pakistan in relation to Afghanistan is establishing stability in its neighboring country, which can help ensure domestic security and economic prosperity (Malik & Zhilong, 2018). The geopolitical location of Afghanistan makes it a critical neighbor for Pakistan, directly affecting the country's national security and strategic objectives. The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has significant spill-over effects on Pakistan, including refugee flows and cross-border terrorism. Therefore, peace in Afghanistan is a critical imperative for Pakistan (Ibid).

Various constraints affect Pakistan's ability to achieve its imperatives in Afghanistan. Notably, the protracted conflict in Afghanistan and the involvement of external powers have complicated Pakistan's diplomatic maneuvers (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). Moreover, relations have been strained by issues such as border disputes, disagreements over the status of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and accusations from the Afghan government regarding Pakistan's alleged support for the Taliban (Ibid). These issues underscore the inherent complexity of the relationship between the two neighbors, and present significant challenges for Pakistan in its effort to stabilize the region.

The potential for fruitful cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan remains significant. Stability be achieved in Afghanistan, and it could open up opportunities for enhanced trade, energy cooperation, and regional connectivity (Asian Development Bank, n.d.-a). Pakistan, as the gateway to Central Asia, could potentially serve as a trade route

for Afghanistan, thereby increasing economic interdependence and peace prospects. Cooperation in sectors like energy, particularly gas and electricity, could be mutually beneficial. Furthermore, a stable Afghanistan can also offer potential for greater regional integration, particularly within the framework of organizations such as SAARC and ECO (Asia Regional Integration Center, 2024).

The optimization of the interaction between geopolitics and geo-economics in the context of Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan is a complicated process that encompasses peacekeeping, conflict resolution, regional integration, and economic cooperation (Harvey, 2007).

In a geopolitical ideal world, Pakistan is to be functioned as a stabilizing force in the region and exert influence over the Taliban to promote a peaceful resolution to the conflicts (Akram & Riaz, 2023). Similar events might lead to the normalization of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the diplomatic front, promoting an environment friendly to corporate cooperation. This would help the growth of both nations' economy by maintaining a stable and safe environment, which is consistent with the neo-liberal emphasis on cooperation and harmony (Harvey, 2007).

Geo-economically speaking, the ideal interaction would see Pakistan forming strong economic ties with Afghanistan, maybe by fostering commerce, developing collaborative infrastructure projects, and streamlining cross-border commercial dealings (Asian Development Bank, n.d.-a). This would require making use of any advantages that might result from both countries' geostrategic locations. By connecting Afghanistan to markets across South Asia and beyond, for instance, Pakistan may greatly promote regional economic integration (Dawn, 2020; Asian Development Bank, n.d).

To accomplish this fruitful link, it is crucial to carefully avoid the constraints that were previously discussed. It would be important to boost trust between the two countries, resolve border disputes, and address concerns about cross-border militancy (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). With the United States, China, and Russia all having interests in Afghanistan, Pakistan must maintain a delicate balance in its relations with these powerful countries (Paul, 2018).

In summary, the best possible geopolitical and geo-economic interaction in Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan will be achieved by concentrating on the dual goals of peace building and economic cooperation and removing the barriers that presently prohibit this interplay.

### **6.6.3 Iran**

The relationship between Pakistan and Iran is defined by a complex interplay of historical ties, regional geopolitics, and economic potentials. As immediate neighbors, their bilateral dynamics is characterized by moments of cooperation and disagreements (Czulda, 2023). Utilizing the neo-liberal framework aids in understanding these relationships, emphasizing the potential for cooperation, shared norms, and opportunities for multilateral engagement (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

For Pakistan, engaging Iran in its foreign policy framework remains a vital national imperative due to several reasons. Firstly, Iran's geographic proximity positions it as an immediate neighbor, making cooperative engagement critical for regional security and stability. Secondly, Pakistan's energy demands necessitate maintaining diplomatic relations with Iran, a significant energy supplier (Ali, 2022). Moreover, the large Shia

population in Pakistan calls for a peaceful relationship with Iran, which is a major Shia state, to ensure internal harmony (Khan & Sajjad, 2023).

Despite the imperatives, several constraints impede Pakistan's optimal engagement with Iran. Primarily, the enduring U.S.-Iran tension presents a significant challenge, as Pakistan needs to maintain a delicate balance in its relationship with both countries (Kumar, 2008). Secondly, Pakistan's alignment with Saudi Arabia, Iran's regional rival, complicates the bilateral relationship (Khan & Sajjad, 2023). Moreover, cross-border security issues, including militant activities and drug trafficking, pose an enduring constraint (Fair, 2014).

Yet, there are numerous potentials for Pakistan in its relationship with Iran. The completion of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline could significantly alleviate Pakistan's energy crisis (Ali, 2022). Trade relations have the potential to be vastly improved, considering Iran's rich natural resources and Pakistan's growing markets. Furthermore, a stable relationship with Iran could contribute to regional peace, crucial for Pakistan's security and economic development (Khan et al., 2019).

The best way for Pakistan to interact with Iran on a geopolitical and geo-economic level is to manage limits and take advantage of opportunities to further national objectives. According to the neo-liberal paradigm, there are methods for the two nations to advance their relationship by putting an emphasis on collaboration, shared values, and multilateral engagement (Harvey, 2007).

It is important to promote increased diplomatic interaction in the geopolitical spheres. Terrorism and regional security are two issues that both nations have in common and which might serve as the foundation for a fruitful conversation (Karim, 2023).

Encouragement of multi-tiered diplomatic engagement would underline the shared goal in peaceful cohabitation and collaboration, which would help ease the restrictions imposed by geopolitical opponents. In addition, cultural diplomacy could be used to strengthen these ties given the historical links and shared cultural and religious affinities (Awan, 2018).

Opportunities for trade and investment in the geo-economic domain are to be seen profoundly. Despite the potential for economic growth, there has historically been little trade between Pakistan and Iran. This is partly because of financial restrictions brought on by financial sanctions against Iran (Wasi, 2023). Both nations should look at opportunities within the scope of the Preferential Trade Agreement and the goals of the ECO in order to get beyond these obstacles (MoCom, n.d.). The Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline is a prime example of the energy sector's potential (Subohi, 2024). Additionally, improving border infrastructure and boosting connectivity could promote economic interdependence.

The relationship between Iran and Pakistan can be seen as a demonstration of neo-liberal theory in action (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Although the framework argues that nurturing these aspects could result in a more positive and beneficial relationship, the concepts of collaboration, shared norms, and multilateral participation have been hindered by external geopolitical considerations (Khan & Sajjad, 2023). A careful balancing of interests and goals would be necessary to successfully navigate this complex geopolitical and geo-economic terrain, not just between Pakistan and Iran but also with regard to their interactions with other regional and global powers.

## **6.7 The interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics considering the national imperatives, constraints and potentials with Muslim Countries and Groups**

This part of the chapter casted light on the multifaceted interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics in Pakistan's relations with fellow Muslim countries and groups. The neo-liberalism framework of the analysis gives the details of Pakistan's state being a prominent Muslim country and others falling in the categories are Saudi Arabia, Turkey, other major Muslim countries, Central Asian Republics, African Muslim Countries, and Organization of the Islamic Cooperation.

Such interstate relationships which are based on common religious and cultural ties have profound effect on the manner in which Pakistan makes and executes the foreign policy plan and its engagements on the global platform with Muslim entities (Ahmed & Akbarzadeh, 2023). This part of the study sought to understand the complex interaction between the influencers and the impacts of the countries and groups which are formed and cast prints on Pakistan's geopolitics and geo-economics (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

### **6.7.1 Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a custodial state for Muslims worldwide, thus its relationship with Pakistan is a legacy of mutual religious, cultural, and strategic affinities (Asseri, 2022). Energy supply being one of the key determinants of the interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics in Saudi case is highly evident considering the fact that it is one of the leading energy producers and a major player in the Gulf region. Reviewing the neo-liberalism intonations, it shed light to have a research on national imperatives, limitations, and prospects that set up Pakistan with Saudi Arabia (Harvey, 2007).

The national imperatives for Pakistan in its relationship with Saudi Arabia have been categorized under main themes i.e. military alliances and treaties, economic, and religious interests. In terms of the security, Saudi Arabia have always been reliable as an ally for Pakistan in providing support during many conflicts and diplomatic crises (Asseri, 2022). Economically, Saudi Arabia is for Pakistan an important source of remittances and has offered aid regularly in times of acutely economic troubles (Masood & Abi-Habib, 2019). Not only is the religious connection established via Islam, but Islam thus crafts that specific bond that further strengthens the ties.

The paradoxical constraints in the Pakistan-Saudi relations are the outcome of the wicked geopolitical problems of the Middle East (Ali & Ahmad, 2021). The Saudi-Iran rivalry for instance creates a situation where Pakistan is torn between the two rivals and that is why Pakistan is very uncomfortable when it has to choose one or the other and maintain relations with both parties (Khan & Sajjad, 2023). The fast evolving Saudi-Indo relations serve as a headache for Pakistan.

In spite of constraints, this prospect is offering many possibilities in the growth of this relationship. Economically speaking, there are possibilities for the expansion of bilateral investment and commerce, especially in segments where there is competitive advantage in generation of energy, agriculture and innovations in the information technology (Ahmed, 2023). Geopolitically, both countries have their stake in the matters of regional stability, so, they can collaborate to establish platforms to strengthen their interests like OIC (OIC, 2022). The Vision 2030 stocktaking of Saudi Arabia opens the way to further partnership in general commerce, for example, areas like entertainment, tourism, and sports, which show clear change from outdated categories (Al-Barakati,

2024). Pakistan can guide other services-sector-based industries in Saudi Arabia in adopting models from its experience so as to help the latter in realization of its Vision 2030 plan which is meant to diversify the Saudi economy. (MoFA, 2018). Trade between the two countries might be expanded to include industries other than the conventional energy one, which could lead to new opportunities for economic collaboration.

Pakistan must strike a balance in its geopolitical connections with Iran and Saudi Arabia while maintaining good relations with other regional countries. In order to achieve this, neutrality in disputes like the Saudi-Iranian conflict must be promoted, and the preservation of regional stability must be prioritized (Ali & Ahmad, 2021). Pakistan should promote for peace, harmony, and cooperation among Muslim countries as an OIC member and take a leading part in mediating regional conflicts (Ahmed & Akbarzadeh, 2023).

A deeper understanding of one another and the development of greater societal links can be facilitated by cultural exchanges, educational initiatives, and travel. Although not directly political or economically related, this factor can significantly affect how resilient and long lasting the two countries' relationship remains (Asseri, 2022). Moreover, it is crucial that Pakistan's relations with Saudi Arabia mesh with the country's overarching foreign policy goals to ensure that they are mutually beneficial, long lasting, and respectful of its sovereignty (MoFA, 2024h).

In essence, an integrated and balanced strategy that takes into account the complexities of their bilateral interactions is necessary for the geopolitical and economic dynamics between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to interact as effectively as possible. This entails strengthening our economic ties, adopting a geopolitical posture that is balanced, and emphasizing cultural diplomacy.

### **6.7.2 Turkey**

Mutual respect, shared religious and cultural ties, and consistent political support on global platforms have always characterized Turkey-Pakistan relations (Javed & Baloch, 2023). The neoliberal perspective can provide a more nuanced understanding of these interplays, focusing on areas such as the international system, economic liberalization, and the significance of institutions in shaping foreign policy (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

For Pakistan, Turkey is a significant ally due to several national imperatives. Firstly, Turkey's geopolitical location as a bridge between Europe and Asia holds strategic importance for Pakistan's interests in these regions (Ahmad & Naseeb, 2023). Second, Turkey's economic growth and technological advancements makes it an attractive economic partner. Third, Turkey's influence within the Muslim world and its role in institutions like the OIC is crucial for Pakistan's own standing in the Islamic community (Ahmed & Akbarzadeh, 2023).

There are certain constraints in the relationship as well as political differences, particularly over the recognition of Israel, have surfaced over the years, showing a divergence in foreign policy approaches (Javed et al., 2023). The regional politics of the Middle East, including Turkey's strained relations with Saudi Arabia, also present challenges (BBC News, 2021). Furthermore, economic disparities and variations in development trajectories can hinder the potential for economic integration.

Nonetheless, the potentials for deepening cooperation between Pakistan and Turkey are significant. Economically, there is room for expanding bilateral trade and investment. Sectors such as defense, tourism, energy, information technology, and textiles could be targeted for increased collaboration (Ahmad & Naseeb, 2023). Geopolitically, both

countries can work more closely within multilateral organizations, and further solidify their diplomatic coordination on issues of mutual concern, such as Kashmir and Cyprus (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2024). In this approach, a strong economic alliance can promote economic expansion, social advancement, and prosperity at the national level (Keohane & Nye, 1998).

However, maintaining a balance is necessary due to the complexity of world politics. Pakistan must carefully manage its relations with Turkey to avoid upsetting other important partners like Saudi Arabia given the shifting dynamics of the Middle East and the larger Islamic world (Javed & Baloch, 2023). Adopting neoliberal concepts, which stress the value of collaboration, interdependence, and the influence of international institutions on state behavior, should make it easier to achieve this balance (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Overall, the best balancing of geopolitics and geo-economics in Pakistan-Turkey relations will improve not only the two countries' bilateral relations but also the stability and prosperity of the region.

### **6.7.3 Other Key Muslim States**

Pakistan's relations with Egypt, Malaysia, Qatar, the UAE, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and other key states within the Islamic and broader international community are multifaceted, encompassing strategic, economic, and cultural dimensions, each influenced by historical legacies, regional power dynamics, and global geopolitical shifts.

The geopolitical and geo-economic imperatives for Pakistan in fostering relations with these states include expanding diplomatic outreach, enhancing trade and investment opportunities, securing energy supplies, and leveraging support on regional and international platforms. For instance, Egypt's strategic location and influence within the

Arab League and African Union present unique opportunities for Pakistan to strengthen its presence in these regions (Recorder Report, 2024). Similarly, Malaysia's economic dynamism and leadership role within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) offer Pakistan a platform to promote Islamic solidarity and economic partnership (Yu, 2021).

The constraints facing Pakistan in these relationships often stem from political instability, economic disparities, and competing foreign policy interests. For example, Egypt's political landscape post-Arab Spring and its nuanced stance on key issues like Kashmir have posed challenges for Pakistan (Nelson, 2022). The relationship with Malaysia, while generally positive, is sometimes complicated by Malaysia's closer ties with India (Yahya, 2005). Furthermore, labor rights concerns for Pakistani workers in Qatar and the UAE's growing partnership with India illustrate the complexities of maintaining balanced relations amidst diverging national interests (Saeed, 2022).

Despite these challenges, there are significant potentials for bolstering relations, underscored by shared interests and opportunities for economic and political collaboration. In the case of Qatar, the country's role in mediating regional conflicts and its vast natural gas reserves make it an invaluable partner for Pakistan's energy security and regional diplomacy (Kiani, 2021). Similarly, the UAE's Vision and Pakistan's Vision provide a framework for synergistic cooperation in areas like trade, renewable energy, and infrastructure development (Dakrory, 2023).

For extracting the optimal results of these relations, Pakistan need to put in place a strategy that allows the country to identify the necessary, elaborate the hindrances and utilize all the prospects. It involves intensifying diplomatic communication, as a tool for, and multilateral platforms. For instance, Pakistan could find common grounds with Egypt

and the UAE, partly on areas where all stakeholders focus, for instance tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy, and they could build up synergies in those areas which are advantageous to economic cooperation. Furthermore, a country declaring Islamic brotherhood through unity and harmonization of converged efforts within OIC can improve position of Pakistan within the OIC and beyond.

#### **6.7.9 Other Gulf Muslim States, Central Asian, African Muslim Countries and Organization of Islamic Conference**

Pakistan has the same imperatives for its foreign policy when working with the Gulf states like Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain, and with CARs, and African Muslims Countries groups, like OIC, which all aim at the similar strategies, that means the similar strategic depth, economic prosperity, and diplomatic leverage (MoFA, n.d.-f; MoFA, n.d.-g). Historical ties, economic interdependencies, common religious and cultural roots are likewise same as the incentives that underpin these imperatives. For instance, the strategic importance of Gulf countries due to their geographic locations and hydrocarbon wealth offers Pakistan significant economic and energy security opportunities (MoIB, 2023).

Similarly, the CARs' potential as energy suppliers and trade partners aligns with Pakistan's ambitions to serve as a regional connectivity hub (Zuridinov, 2022). BRI's infrastructure and technological advancements present a stark contrast to the pre-BRI era, offering a tangible pathway for Pakistan to achieve greater connectivity with Central Asia. Hence there appears to a greater emphasis on geo-economics is at the heart of Pakistan's first national security policy and its 'Vision Central Asia' policy (GoP, 2022; MOFA, 2022).

Despite the clear imperatives, Pakistan faces numerous constraints in realizing its foreign policy objectives. These include political instability in the region, the challenge of balancing relationships with countries having conflicting interests, and the infrastructural and logistical barriers that limit trade and connectivity with the CARs and African Muslim Countries. Furthermore, the effectiveness of multilateral organizations like the OIC in advancing Pakistan's interests is often hindered by the divergent priorities of member states and a lack of cohesive action (Zikriya et al., 2022).

The potential for deepening ties with these regions and entities remains significant. Economic engagement with Gulf countries could see Pakistan benefiting from investments in infrastructure and energy. With the CARs, the completion of projects like the CPEC could unlock new economic opportunities and energy access (Galimov, 2022). Engagement with African Muslim Countries offers Pakistan a chance to diversify its trade and explore new markets (MoCom, n.d.-a). Within the OIC, Pakistan can leverage its position to galvanize support for key issues like the Kashmir conflict and combat Islamophobia, enhancing its international standing and fostering Islamic solidarity (OIC, 2022).

To optimize the interaction of geopolitics and geo-economics in its relationships with these countries and within the OIC, Pakistan must adopt a multifaceted strategy. This strategy should be rooted in active diplomacy, robust economic partnerships, and strategic political relations, underpinned by the principles of neo-liberalism that emphasize cooperation, interdependence, and the constructive role of international institutions (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

Pakistan needs to maintain high-level diplomatic engagements with Gulf countries, CARs, and African Muslim states to navigate the geopolitical complexities and advocate for its interests effectively within the OIC (MoFA, n.d.-f; MoFA, n.d.-g). Strengthening trade ties, enhancing connectivity through infrastructure development, and exploring joint ventures in sectors like energy, agriculture, and technology are critical. Initiatives like CPEC could serve as catalysts for regional integration and economic cooperation (MoPD&S, 2024). In light of this, the distribution of priorities and balancing with countries that have different interests, particularly in the Gulf and the OIC are very crucial and should be given the appropriate respect by considering common interests and the need for regional stability and cooperation among these countries.

Enhancement of engagement in the OIC and other regional bodies can accordingly raise the volume of Pakistan's voice on world platform as these organizations share common problems, which they can address collectively (OIC, 2022). Apart from that, it will also help Islam's collective interests to be strengthened.

The dynamic geometry and economics of the geopolitics and geo-economics which define the nature of Pakistan's relations and partnerships with the Muslim world including Gulf countries, Central Asian Republics, African Muslim Countries, and within the OIC framework, require a strategic approach that takes into consideration the imperatives, constraints, and offers maximum advantages along the way. Through its geopolitical placement, cultural links, and the move towards a neo-liberal system that is anchored to it, Pakistan can hike its global status, endeavor economic growth, and promote regional and Islamic solidarity (Keohane & Nye, 2011).

## **Major Findings and Conclusion**

This chapter is concentrated on giving a brief account of the research results, summarizing the conclusions and then presenting policy recommendations for foreign policy initiatives for the future and possible other research areas. This last part of the dissertation is to make overall conclusions based on the thorough analysis of the interaction between geo-politics and geo-economics in decision making of foreign policy by Pakistan. The part aimed not only to portray out the research results of the study but also to give insight into the overall potential of the implications.

### **Major Findings**

'Major Findings' section summarized the key findings of the in-depth analysis that took place in various chapters of the research. This study came down to an in-depth analysis of the brewing and intersection of the geopolitics-geo-economics realms and the way it has impacted the foreign policy of Pakistan throughout the period since 1947, particularly focusing post 2008. The study of Chapter One remained encapsulation of Neo-Liberalism – Theoretical Framework utilized as a lens for this dissertation.

The study of Chapter Two in beginning set in years 1947–2008 captured essential aspects of traditional Pakistan's foreign policy and achieved objective and, answer to question no one. The findings illuminated the fact that Pakistan's main diplomatic policy was largely aimed at the geopolitical imbalances, involving economic factors as minor supporting elements. There were many factors behind Pakistan's foreign policy but the Cold War's geopolitics, specific topography, Islamic ideology and concerns, War on Terrorism and security conditions with India were among the critical contours.

The study of Chapter Three and Chapter Four predominantly achieved objective and answer to question no two by ascertaining the interplay of geopolitics and geo-economics in the foreign policy of Pakistan post 2008. After a major turn of undergoing a profound shift, Pakistan's foreign policy has no longer been leaning towards a traditional security-centric approach rather in favor of a market-oriented one, appreciating the country's geo-economic advantage and global political changes. In addition to encouraging economic development, the shift also sought to establish beneficial regional relations and portrayed Pakistan as an economic player in the regional framework.

An expanded outstretching engagement involved weaning away from strong allies like the US and leaning towards close interactions with China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and neighboring Iran. At the heart of this overhaul remained the CPEC and SIFC, which undertook to trigger tangible growth through connectivity, energy, infrastructure and trade enabling projects. The strategy of Pakistan met evolving international dynamics through geo-economic restructuring having a lot of hope for national growth, regional integration and foreign diversification devising a policy to handle challenges from the point of economic, environmental and geopolitical fronts.

This research was designed thereafter with the purpose of exploring the arena thereby geopolitics and geo-economics meet in the case of Pakistan, which has brought to light by means of the country's relations with major powers, its neighboring countries and other Muslim nations. The dynamics, impacts and influence of globalization on the foreign policy of Pakistan were examined through the evolved prism of neoliberalism post 2008. The investigation of this study has documented several findings of substantial evidences.

By the study outcomes, both these factors cannot be regarded independent but rather interdependent, because choosing a certain way in one field whose result (positive or negative) directly or indirectly affected the other. The research showed the significant variations that took place in Pakistan's foreign policy regarding the major countries, such as the US, Russia, and China, post 2008 being an important crunch. Geo-economic variables comprising commerce, investment, energy collaboration along geo-political elements involving regional security situations played prominent part. The formulation and implementation of Pakistan's foreign policy and its status with important states were affected by the interplay of such variables. Pakistan's relations with the United States faced turmoil because of the dynamics in not only politics but also economy (aid and trade).

Despite the fact that War on Terror and other geopolitical makeups of Pakistan and the U.S. have been the major contours carrying these states forward, CPEC is the most iconic of the trending realms to transform the partnership's focus from geopolitical to geo-economics because of China. Furthermore, whether the engagement of India, Afghanistan, and Iran on the geopolitical and geo-economic fronts was being competently and coordinately managed was also worth serious consideration. Geo-economic values such as trade, routes of transport and regional integration projects were highlighted factors, whereas, the geopolitical parameters such as territorial issues, regional security concerns and major powers involvement were other aspects. These variables played an intricate web of coordinates to shape Pakistan's policy thereby, neighbouring states have been opting more for geo-economic links but geo-political realms acted as hindrance at many of the times.

Subsequently, the geopolitical as well as geo-economic components were regarded to be vital in this study of the Pakistan's dealings with the Muslim states. Apart from the elements concerning economy (trade, investments) as well as development relations, the dynamics of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia and interactions with other Muslim entities were also set on the background of religion, and culture. In addition, the nexus of the global security issues, involvement of big powers and geopolitical factors helped to shape Pakistan's foreign policy decisions in the Muslim world.

By taking a neoliberal approach that believes strong economic ties among states, has increased the peaceful dimension of their relationship and enhanced cooperation, the effect of these factors was looked at and acted as a boost for the country's economic development and regional integration; making it a critical geo-economic mission for Pakistan. The fact that it is situated strategically and that the regional countries were concerned about it made the matter sometimes complicated reinforcing the balance between geopolitics and geo-economics.

The research disclosed links between geopolitics and geo-economics that dominated the framework of foreign policy in Pakistan after 2008. This interplay consisted of interdependence, as well as, the economic activities, lesser regional conflicts and strategic partnerships. Through the neo-liberal framework, the complex web of interdependence was heavily delved into the impacts on the foreign policy decisions of Pakistan.

The research submitted that the handing over of the foreign policy to a particular course required acute-mindedness, which facilitated quantification of the relations between

geopolitics and geo-economics. In such cases, the factors stressed the situation for impartial options, which played role when decisions over foreign policy were made.

The study of “Chapter Five” was a comprehensive ascertainment of the impacts of intended transition from geopolitics to geo-economics on the foreign policy of Pakistan that helped achieving the third objective and answered third question. The findings pointed out to the fact that external and internal both economic aspects have become the determining factor in the changing country’s foreign policy. Regional economic integration, as well as trade liberalization and infrastructure connectivity, have evinced a transition away from a narrative and reality of traditional security. Likewise, internal economic vulnerability and economic security were dominating domestic factors. The CPEC, SIFC and other trade agreements, and policies offered evidences of that shift and not only affected inter-country ties but became drivers of the country's economic growth.

The transition from geo-politics to geo-economics in Pakistan has impacted to a strategic recalibration, shifting from a security-oriented to an economic-focused foreign policy. This shift emphasized economic globalization, enhanced trade, regional integration, and the privatization of government-owned enterprises. Diplomatic relations have evolved with a focus on economic partnerships alongside a regional pivot from pro-West to Eastern diplomacy (while tried maintaining balance). Pakistan has adopted soft strategies, such as development aid, multilateral trade agreements, FDI's ease and cultural promotion.

Economically, the country has witnessed surge in exports (notably in agro, food, and IT sectors), increased remittances, higher FDI's and a reversal of the current account deficit to surplus. The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has reached new highs. Furthermore, this transition has prioritized economic security, focusing on the protection

of economic corridors (e.g., CPEC), energy security through regional trade and strengthening maritime capabilities. Active participation in international anti-piracy missions and measures to protect the digital economy against cyber threats have become key components, while countering insurgency and terrorism has been seen as essential for fostering economic growth.

The CPEC was the main driver of the Pakistan's economy and as a factor that was to strengthen Pak-China economic relations as an impact, this witness the relations changing towards more of the geo-economic considerations. Similar move took its place in US-Pakistan relations: these traditional geopolitical ties powered by common pursuit of fighting terrorism were becoming increasingly mixed with economic relations and support in international financial institutions. Likewise, with Russia, there has been an unprecedented surge in economic activities. The role of the private sector in the industry, recognizing sectors like energy and agriculture, has become a significant nuance of the relationship showing the impact of geo-economics tilt.

Moreover, the study examined how Pakistan's relations with its neighboring nations, particularly with India, Afghanistan and Iran are impacted by this transformation. It has been the result of the study that although there were several security and political instabilities, yet, there remained a greater tilt for growing economic exchange in the region. The private sector companies were among the most crucial drivers of this economic activity those affected for better economic relations.

On the other hand, research identified the importance of reforming the attitude of the modern Muslim world through the self-realization. Focused remained on the establishment of a harmonious society between the old and the new era by forming new

regional frameworks and active economic relations through the organizations like OIC, ECO and GCC that aimed at regional and Muslim economic cooperation while shifting away from the security-centered agendas.

However, after confronting the undeniable position of economic concerns, geopolitics and historical security issues remained the vital measures in the alignment of Pakistan's foreign policy direction. The interaction between the accessibility and control produced thus formed a policy environment in which the government had to be very careful to protect its interests at international level.

Nevertheless, the results portrayed clearly that Pakistan has started to shift from the most relevant aspect of political geography to more balanced one that gave economic factors the more relevant part. This process has been significantly shaped by the security economy of Pakistan along with the international trend of economy interdependence, which is marked by the attend of neoliberalism.

Economic matters were at the center of stage yet security dimensions (hybrid) those were highly influencing the state's foreign policy decisions affected the opinions but to a lesser extent. This process comprised of a delicate process for the authorities to handle the situation in a way that state could capitalize on opportunities but also monitor constraints.

Next research delved into a comprehensive overview of geo-politics and geo-economics in the perspective of Pakistan's imperatives, constraints, and potentials through Chapter Six and also achieved the objective four and addressed answer to question four. In light of neo-liberal prism, these findings portrayed outcome with major powers, neighboring states and Islamic countries or groups.

Pakistan's primary imperatives, including economic growth, security and regional influence, have very much defined its national and international stances. Economic growth and the need for energy security, has been a central focus. Security imperatives, influenced by regional dynamics and global geopolitical shifts, have necessitated a balance between military spending and economic development. Pakistan bear with various constraints as well, which have hindered its foreign policy-making from economic and political aspect. Economic deficiencies like reliance on foreign assistance and balance of trade were main obstacles in its economic foreign policy initiatives.

National politics within the country often exhibited a lack of coordinated policy that frustrated the implementation of cohesive and consistent foreign policy. Whilst there were quite a number of constraints in terms of the geo-political and geo-economic potential that Pakistan held, this study examined more of potentials as well. The fact that it is a strategically located country, the CPEC and SIFC initiative and its transformative diplomatic relations created grounds for both in economic and strategic terms. Sectors that have the potentials like IT, agriculture, mining, defense production and renewable energy made it visible that the country stands for steady economic progress and development.

The interplay between geo-politics and geo-economics in the foreign policy of Pakistan, in particular, is visible in how it tackled the intricacies of its regional and global relationships. The neo-liberalism approach sees the importance of economic interdependency and highlights the market mechanisms as the drivers of foreign policy decisions. This study have captured economic diplomacy as the main constituent and true representative of Pakistan's foreign policy that has been extensively based on the neo-liberal ideas and beliefs. Implementation of CPEC is not only about industrial boom, but

also about strengthening of regional connectivity and influence, which is one of the tenets of neo-liberalism.

Neoliberalism has been inculcated in Pakistan's foreign policy by the effect of globalization. Similar to other countries, the main source of foreign policy has been facilitating integration into the world economy that gave prominence to economic matters such as trades, investments and economic partnerships.

The study of Major Powers, in particular, the USA, China, and Russia revealed how deeply and sophisticatedly these geo-political and geo-economic factors are knotted with Pakistan. The US even though it has fluctuation in its relationship with Pakistan, in the case of the economic and military aid it renders, remained a major country of importance at international level. While, the constraints comes from the strategic alignment position of the US with India and its containment policy for China. For Russia, past prejudices and regional hegemonic interests have strained Pakistan's capacity for cooperation, but post 2008, there has been a softening of the atmosphere in their relationships, particularly economic. In this context, not only does China's CPEC project in Pakistan reflect Beijing's growth in the geo-economic development of Islamabad but also reaffirm China's importance for leading economy of the world. While research recognized this situation that heavy dependence on China poses its own challenges.

The challenge befalling neighboring countries like India in this regard due to the historical disputes, border conflicts and strategic rivalry emerged from the very nature of geopolitics. Despite this, a wealth of opportunities remained untapped, particularly in the geo-economic realm, with the potential to achieve transactions worth billions of dollars. Afghanistan shares cultural and social identification with Pakistan and it is the country with

the great geo-economic potential. However, the problems of political instability and security concerns were recurring with Afghanistan. Similarly, Iran, given its cultural and religious similarities, has been viewed as more of an opportunity rather a constraint in economic terms. However, sectarian differences, security concerns and international sanctions significantly influence relations.

The study's exploration of Muslim countries and groups elucidated the interplay of geo-political and geo-economic dynamics with significant Muslim states and organizations. The findings emphasized the economic importance of the Middle Eastern countries, particularly KSA, UAE, and Qatar, with their significant financial resources and jobs for Pakistani workers, but also highlighted the geopolitical challenges, especially regarding conflicts in the Middle East. Similarly, Pakistan's relationships with Turkey, Egypt and Malaysia, demonstrated the opportunities for increased trade and cooperation. In terms of Muslim groups, the OIC was seen as a platform for Pakistan to forge closer ties with the broader Muslim world, but the organization's limited political power presents a significant constraint.

This research validated that Pakistan possessed an enormous geo-economic prospect because of its strategic geopolitical position in South Asia and resources, but the multiple factors remained impeding this appropriate utilization. Additionally, there are more opportunities than constraints, provided they are utilized effectively.

A summit view of this research included the fact that Pakistan's geopolitical setting in a larger region with major powers and conflict zones brought about an imperative call for a stable, pragmatic and strategic foreign policy. The coalition needed to mediate accordingly among these heavyweights, as they are not only involved in geo-politics, but

also in geo-economics. Furthermore, neighboring countries and other Muslim states hold considerable sway in shaping Pakistan's policies, adding another layer of complexity.

The constraints, which the Pakistan was subjected were multiple fold and included the internal political instability, economy problems, and the security concerns and the external bilateral and regional diplomatic pressures. These not only trimmed down the effectiveness of Pakistan's economic benefits, but also affected the political process.

Nonetheless, the said problems are not insurmountable and Pakistan stands on a potential ground to take advantage of the geo-political and geo-economic elements. The CPEC, SIFC, regional integration arrangements and economic prioritized diplomacy signify the movement towards diversifying the economic pillars of Pakistan.

The findings present a mixed bag of opportunities and challenges for Pakistan in the realm of geo-politics and geo-economics. The intersection of these two domains will continue to define and drive Pakistan's foreign policy decisions, highlighting the importance of a balanced approach in managing this interplay, although a tilt towards geo-economics has been observed amicably.

## **Conclusion**

As this research comes to a close, it is crucial to quickly review the cornerstones of Pakistan's foreign policy in order to comprehend how they have changed in relation to the neo-liberal theoretical framework. The complicated interactions between traditional geopolitics and the expanding influence of geo-economics on Pakistan's international relations have been the subject of the study.

Early geopolitical issues such regional alliances, territorial disputes, and strategic rivalry had a significant impact on Pakistan's foreign policy. However, as the world has

grown more interconnected, it has been increasingly obvious how important economic interdependence and collaboration are, which has caused a paradigm shift in Pakistan's approach to foreign policy.

The key conclusion of the research study brought to light the fundamental change in the relationships and discourses of the international affairs. According to neo-liberalist paradigm, research presented that Pakistan has molded from a traditionally, geopolitically oriented state into a country, which gave with more geo-economic priorities both in response to and as a reflection of the global events.

To throw a light on the analysis of Pakistan's traditional foreign policy, it is clear that geopolitical reasons like throughout the period till 2008 took a definitive role on how the country behaved in the global community. Territory disputes, national security concerns and the alliances have been the major components of Pakistan's foreign relations. This geostrategic approach sometimes confronted with the growing divergent views between some major foreign and regional countries and weakening or strengthening Pakistan internal security.

However, the examination into the interaction between geo-politics and geo-economics post- 2008 revealed an emerging paradigm change. There has been a noticeable movement in Pakistan's foreign policy towards geo-economic considerations, in line with the general trend of expanding economic interconnection. Pakistan has started to capitalize on its advantageous geopolitical location for economic gains.

This move has a significant impact on Pakistan's foreign policy. Geo-economic concerns now have a substantial impact on Pakistan's relations with major powers, its neighbors, and other Islamic countries. Even while economic concerns are increasingly

driving foreign policy, yet geopolitical issues continue to have a significant influence. In order to take advantage of economic possibilities and solve geopolitical challenges, the policy environment is challenging due to the coexistence of these two forces.

Through a detailed assessment of Pakistan's geopolitical and geo-economic imperatives, constraints, and opportunities, the significant complex interdependence has been explained. Despite the considerable geo-economic potential Pakistan's strategic location offers, a variety of internal and external obstacles prohibit it from being properly harnessed. Despite these challenges, initiatives like CPEC, SIFC and others demonstrate that Pakistan is making substantial headway towards fulfilling its geo-economic potential.

Research results were in agreement with the neo-liberal ideas, as they presented the benefits of economic ties through the growing stability worldwide. The course of change in the foreign policy of Pakistan from the geo-political oriented one to the geo-economic one is exactly what the theory investigated. Furthermore, it argued that adaptation entails complex interdependencies.

In this dissertation, it outlines the case how Pakistan is rebalancing its foreign policies against the backdrop of the changing power dynamics in the world. Utilizing geo-economic considerations in the formulation of its foreign policy that act as a primary factor that could allow it achieve economic gains while keeping the security objectives.

The problems are evidently numerous given the fact there are a lot of economic, political and security issues but if addressed in an efficient manner there would be a new era of diplomatic interactions between the countries as well as economic development that would lead to the resolution of the existing geopolitical crisis. The vitality for divergence in terms of alliances Pakistan relied on traditionally is one of the significant transformations

of this era. For furthering economic cooperation and partnerships of the country, this has become a necessity by the world moving the way of the global economic integration. This mean, therefore, that emphasizing geo-economics into Pakistan's foreign policy would be more fruitful than completely discarding a geopolitical approach.

According to neoliberalism, Pakistan is advised to prefer wealth creation by creating trade partnerships with other performing economies including those of its traditional enemies. For instance, by applying such kind of strategy, it can soften inter-regional conflicts and move toward regional peace and prosperity. Part of the geo-economic policy changes made by Pakistan can also be attributed to the influence of domestic economic policies and international organizations.

This attitude corresponds with the neoliberal idea, where international institutions are to serve as collaboration centers and policing of state relations. The occurrence of a geo-economic focused foreign policy's transition process is not simple, however. Pakistan possesses deep internal and foreign problems ensuing upon which the transition is facing difficulties but over-coming gradually. Under the neo-liberalist position, the central stress is put on the need for nations to build and implement innovations that enables countries to overcome these obstacles successfully in order to achieve their respective national prospective in the context of the world economy and hence prosper.

Pakistan's neo-liberal foreign policy has far-reaching ramifications as it transitions from a geo-political to a geo-economic focus. Relationships are being reoriented, domestic reforms are being made and international economic institutions have been actively engaged and obstacles are been navigated and surmounted.

## **Key Recommendations**

The results from the analysis for Pakistan's foreign policy, covering the shift towards geo-economics instead of geo-politics, hold significant meanings for the country's path ahead. One of the most important obstacles to planning is that this change offers with both fascinating opportunities and the complicated challenges. Thus, a well-delineated policy is necessary to ensure that the decision makers take an optimized approach to cope with the imminent alteration. The stated part indicates the base of recommendations followed by advisory of policies under the neo-liberalism framework.

In light of the analysis conducted in the previous chapters and the implications drawn, the following are suggestions that could guide the future direction of Pakistan's foreign policy within a neo-liberal framework. These suggestions are drawn from the research findings and aim to promote the shift from geo-politics to geo-economics in Pakistan's foreign policy.

Firstly and as priority is for Pakistan to very much attentively consider broadening its relationships. Of course, the reality presents that traditional partners and allies are the least changeable for any country. Nevertheless, nowadays, the fluidity of the global dynamics increases the necessary inclusiveness. This would mean involving other nations with the help of diplomacy as well as expanding efforts to look for potential new allies. Taking into consideration the development of geo-economic factor over geo-political one, the new alliances should be consolidated on the basis of common economic interests.

In this regard, Pakistan should focus particularly on crafting a pacific domestic setting in which sustained economic growth can be a reality. This comprises refining a reliable legal environmental, strengthening transparency, fighting corruption and

supporting good governance, etc. Such aspects can make country a target destination for multinational organizations as well as different countries, a requirement under a globalizing environment where economy stands on inter-dependence.

Hence, apart from the investment as financial capital, human capital development should also be in focus of Pakistan. There is a growing trend of investing towards education and particularly in the area of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM); this is to put the workforce in the right position to compete effectively in the knowledge based economy. In addition, creating channels for the return of diaspora talent can also contribute to the knowledge pool of the country. Otherwise, the diaspora abroad could be encouraged to support joint ventures between their host countries and Pakistan.

Additionally, Pakistan needs to join up with the international organizations. Practical leadership within such forums tends to support the global economy, participate in addressing common issues and develop an investment favorable environment. Connections of such a kind also offer possibilities for peaceful talks and peaceful conflict solving politically, which are very important for the stability in the region and development of the economy.

Besides, Pakistan should maintain itself in dealing with the tensions between the geopolitical needs and the geo-economic goals. This balance becomes a delicate one, as the member countries also must address their own national security issues while pursuing the community's economic goals. In this regard, foreign policy decisions should be evaluated with a holistic approach, taking into account both these dimensions, but prioritizing geo-economics. These proposals which emanate from a neoliberal frame of

reference serve as a guideline with which Pakistan shall deal with this ever changing interdependent world of economy.

Recommendations for leveraging the interplay and transition from geo-politics to geo-economics for Pakistan's foreign policy are outlined as follows:-

- Policymakers should identify and seize opportunities where geo-economic forces are at play. This involves recognizing sectors where Pakistan has proportional advantage and potential to attract foreign investments and nurture these sectors for sustainable growth. This is going to encourage sectors that have its proportionate advantage over its competitors and provides an opportunity to investors including international investors to channelize into these sectors with a long-term vision.
- The fact that geo-economics is picking up trends of diplomacy, signifies that Pakistan should give extra importance to close more preferable trade agreements and treaties with its significant trading partners and seek new markets for the trading. This implies to enhance commitment to regional and global markets.
- One area Pakistan should target is its infrastructure that will enable the country to attract foreign investors together with trade relationships, which will boost economic development of the nation. Initiatives, like the CPEC and SIFC, are of key importance and these should be stepped up for success. It is possible that increased rural connectivity and deepening regional integration may follow.
- Policy makers would benefit from allocating more attention to economic diplomacy which refers to the utilization of economic tools in order to implement foreign policies. This involves bringing trading, pulling external capital in, and ensuring supplies of necessary resources.

- Regional integration that has been highlighted as integral part of the current globe economic setting is of absolute value. Therefore, a quest for amelioration and development of Pakistan's partnership with the regional associations, i.e. SCO, SAARC, OIC, ASEAN and ECO is essential.
- Human capital development via assisting the delivery of quality education and workforce training is a goal that should get the immediate attention. On the one hand, this will make the nation more attractive to and even promote foreign investment; on the other hand, it will enable to negotiate better on geo-economic shifts.
- While Pakistan is headed towards geo-economic priority, it is important to attend the geopolitical concerns, too. Therefore, policymakers need to be well-balanced on security problems facing the world and at the same time work towards the attainment of economic growth and sustainable development.
- Delink economic and political diplomacy and prioritize economic diplomacy, to foster economic growth, decouple political/security agendas from economic diplomacy. Elevate trade and investment as primary drivers of bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

### **Policy advice for optimally managing the interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics**

As part of the transition from geo-politics to geo-economics, Pakistan's foreign policy needs to focus on building strong economic relations with major powers, neighboring states, and Muslim countries. This shift is consistent with neo-liberal theory, emphasizing economic cooperation and integration. The subsequent parts elaborate on this,

providing policy advice on how to balance and optimize the dynamics of geo-politics and geo-economics.

### ***Policy Advise with Major Powers***

As global power dynamics shift towards multi-polarity, Pakistan needs to solidify its relations with all major powers, particularly the United States, Russia and China. U.S.-Pakistan relations must transition from a security-focused approach to economic diplomacy, boosting trade and investment and fostering technology transfer. Regarding the case of China, Pakistan ought to search for alternatives of cooperation beyond CPEC, to explore sectors like technology, mining, manufacturing and agriculture.

Besides, considering the fact of the current friendly diplomatic conversations with Russia, Pakistan should reshape the positive tone to more profitable economic prospects, for instance, growth of joint ventures in the energy sector and the increase in the trade linking. Such piece of advice is fully consistent with the concept of international economic alliance advocated by neo-liberalism. Such efforts would best support the formulation of policies involving the USA, Russia, and China, aligning them with the national interests of the country.

The strategy spans from taking an all-embracing approach to major powers to maintain the diplomatic channels open and internationally resolve contentious controversies for the sake of stability and mutual understanding. The proposed policy entails the deepening of strategic ties as well as switching focus from traditional security to robust economic ties. In addition, the advancement of community in economic intelligence are indispensable, which plays an important role in guiding decisions and supports trade, investment and policy making.

Therefore, joint collaboration and engagement are the key foundations of communication among entities. Prioritize persuasion on the raising of trade, joint ventures and need-benefiting agreements, such as technology, infrastructure, and regional linkage. Security collaboration and adept management of regional dynamics considering relationships with the USA, China, Russia, Iran, and India remain imperative. As well, it is prominent to develop avenues of human exchanges by the shared field of media, academia, culture, and sports with the aim of deepening mutual understanding.

The framework is based on the cooperation program with well-delineated areas of targeted action. Enhancing partnership in IT, agriculture, mining, defence production, renewable energy, disaster management, healthcare, women empowerment and climate change is imperative to facilitate meeting these goals. Similarly, it is crucial to identify Pakistan's unique resources and effectively market them on an international platform. The set of initiatives that would include protecting intellectual property rights, tech transfer, as well as the deepening of collaboration in the fields of science, AI and space are advocated.

In addition to that, it is imperative to build up a strong stand against any propagating anti-state narratives, fake news dissemination, and mapping out clear and sustainable policies along with fruitful partnerships, for positively shaping the country's global image. This encompassing policy framework endeavors to establish a strategic approach towards major powers, fostering multifaceted engagement, cooperation, and sustainable growth while addressing shared challenges and reinforcing global partnerships.

### ***Policy Advice with Neighboring States***

Thus, efficiently managing geopolitical and geo-economics multilateral relationships with its neighbouring states, Pakistan needs an overall multidimensional

policy-making plan which would comprise of the three involved countries, i.e. India, Afghanistan and Iran. In terms of this policy advice, there is the need to stand by the establishment of economic and strategic ties, the development of cultural and academic associations, strengthening the frequency of tourism and open dialogues on contentious issues. Highlighting security collaboration, counter-terrorism, and conflict resolution issues is imperative given that the region is fractionated.

Additionally, mutual respect of national geopolitical interests, collaboration on the science and the technology, together with the framework for financial systems can help to create the solid foundation for common economic policy. The fact that Pakistan carries on its interactions with international organizations might be the balancing of its foreign policy with neighbors in the context of their strategic deals with may hold an important place in geopolitics.

Furthermore, territorial integrity, regional peacekeeping, long-lasting, and harmonious ties with the neighbors are the key roles of sustainable diplomacy. These relationships help Pakistan for national development and regional stability. The mentioned policy initiatives aim to provide policy recommendations on India, Afghanistan, and Iran to effectively advance and safeguard Pakistan's national interests.

A base of trust and mutual understanding becomes the milestone in the process of diplomatic contact. Hence, the conflict resolution particularly in the longstanding issues like Kashmir crises; must needed dialogue should be placed in the top priority as well as the mediation efforts at the international level. As India's strategic and economic partnership has become more complex and diversified, the recent shift from defense-only relations to a multipronged approach must be emphasized. Collaboration in economic

intelligence involves pivotal elements to be followed on. The said trade barriers reduction as well as an expansion of bilateral trade relation networks provide an opportunity for progressing the economic relationship.

Encouraging investments across various sectors such as technology, energy, and infrastructure, and fostering joint ventures among private companies in sectors like IT, agriculture, mining and manufacturing, align with collaborative economic growth strategies. Infrastructure development initiatives, seeking Indian investment within regional frameworks and establishing agreements for shared water resources to ensure water security.

Collaboration in energy partnerships, particularly in renewable energy projects, and enhanced security cooperation, including counter-terrorism measures, are pivotal. Strengthening financial systems, collaborative efforts to debunk anti-state narratives, and fostering cultural, academic, and people-to-people exchanges to promote mutual understanding.

Collaboration on disaster management, climate change strategies, healthcare, human rights dialogues, and women empowerment initiatives, align with global agendas such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and initiatives. Collaborative efforts against organized crime, recognition of geopolitical red lines and joint initiatives in maritime security contribute to regional stability and cooperation. Facilitating consular and legal cooperation, promoting joint manufacturing ventures, enhancing regional connectivity, supporting each other in international forums, engaging in dialogues on nuclear security, and fostering cooperation in FinTech and media exchanges all contribute to a comprehensive approach for sustained and mutually beneficial engagement.

Furthermore, focusing on image-building, ensuring policy stability and enhancing Pakistan's image in Afghanistan, Iran, India and globally while fostering consistent, long-term policies, underscores the need for sustained bilateral relations with regional neighbors.

This holistic policy framework outlines a comprehensive strategy for fostering multifaceted engagement, collaboration, and sustainable growth with neighboring countries, aiming to bolster regional stability, cooperation, and mutual prosperity.

### ***Policy Advise for Muslim Countries and Groups***

Pakistan's interactions with Muslim countries and groups' holds great importance in its foreign policy as sentiments of religious and culture commonality bind countries together. To manage these interactions in the best way possible, Pakistan needs policies that facilitate economic participation, cultural understanding and security issues. One way the globalization helps in increasing economic prosperity and stability is through trade liberalization, foreign investments within the economy and combined efforts in varied areas. Intercultural, academic, and sports experience facilitates the cognition, and understanding, and respect.

Additionally, Pakistan should work together with mutually identifiable security objectives, such as counter-terrorism, extremism, Islamophobia and peace to address the vitality of the region. On the political arena, keep on contributing in forums of Islamic world like OIC enable for more boost of Pakistan's opinion of the world. Following offers to provide policy inputs on Muslim countries and Groups to optimally settle the national interests of Pakistan:

Consistent and proactive diplomatic strategies with Muslim countries and groups continue to be essential as they provide the necessary framework to forge lasting and

beneficial links for global diplomacy. Building stronger partnerships within the Muslim world, appreciating their importance in the region integrates regional security and mutual growth, is key in the struggle to establish reliable blocs. The aim of attracting more trade deals, a diversified list of traded goods and services, as well as encouraging reciprocal investments that include areas such as infrastructural, energy and agricultural projects, should be the important components of the fostering of economic prosperity which eventually leads to shared prosperity.

Supervening the financial systems, unlawful activities, and finance intelligence facilities requires the collaboration of all the stakeholders. Creating confidence and favorable economic links is a question of priority under such collaboration. Collaborating among different areas like energy, healthcare, technology, defense and education as one of the important pillars so the engagement is done comprehensively. Encouragement of cultural exchange, religious conciliation and schemes to establish Islamic unity are quintessential in the dynamics that will help to create common understanding and respect among Muslim countries and communities.

In the same way that facilitating joint projects by sectors of infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, maritime security, and defense industries that are important to mutual security should be the key to achieving the desired stability in the regional. Dialogues pursuit regarding human rights featured among other working areas of progress, labor rights protection and the promotion of legal cooperation are fundamental aspects of that which ensure the human rights protection and the strengthening of the legal frameworks.

Efforts that aim to establish long-term, stable domestic policies as well as create good impressions of Pakistan's international image through strategic partnerships serve hugely in sustaining ties with the Muslim world. Regions' complex interactions and managing relations based on interconnectedness with other crucial states are parts of the process that require attention. Also, there is a necessity for technology cooperation and a collective effort to mitigate cyber threats in the region for the sake of security and stability.

This comprehensive policy framework aims to foster multifaceted collaboration, cultural understanding, and mutual growth between Pakistan and Muslim countries and groups, focusing on economic, socio-cultural, diplomatic, and security-oriented dimensions without singling out any specific nation.

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