
FROM SPEECHES TO IMPLEMENTATION: AN ANALYSIS OF IMRAN KHAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

Nayab Kanwal

PhD Scholar, Department of Pakistan Studies, Government College University, Faisalabad

Prof. Dr. Abdul Qadir Mushtaq (Corresponding Author)

Chairman, Department of Pakistan Studies, Government College University Faisalabad

progcu@gmail.com

Farzana Arshad

Assistant professor, Department of History, GC University Lahore

Abstract

The relationship between political speeches and policy execution is a critical issue especially in nations where internal and external factors influence decision-making. Pakistan during Imran Khan's tenure served as a significant example for analyzing the implementation of such foreign policy as Khan persistently championed a foreign policy that would be autonomous, sovereign, and grounded in principles via his addresses and party manifesto. This article deals with the question, to what degree was Imran Khan's declared foreign policy executed during his time as Prime Minister of Pakistan, and what kind of local and foreign elements hindered the achievement of his proclaimed foreign policy goals? This research used a qualitative methodology incorporating discourse analysis, content analysis, and policy analysis. Primary sources encompass Imran Khan's speeches to the United Nations General Assembly, national address on his foreign policy, official declarations, and the manifesto of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. These discourses were related to the United States, China, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Pakistan's reaction to Islamophobia that contrasted with significant foreign policy choices of Imran Khan. This research revealed that a notable disparity was between Khan's foreign policy speeches and party manifesto and its execution. He conveyed a clear vision of an independent and principle-based foreign policy in his rhetoric, but the execution was only partially realized due to institutional limitations, domestic political factors, economic reliance, regional security issues, and evolving geopolitical circumstances. This research contends that these structural elements constrained PTI's capacity to completely realize its normative foreign policy goals.

Keywords: Imran Khan, Political Discourse, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Strategic Autonomy, Foreign Policy Implementation

Introduction

The foreign policy of Imran Khan was distinguished and populist not solely due to bureaucratic mandates, but from a compelling, ideologically driven narrative communicated directly to country as well as world. Khan utilized prominent international platforms, national broadcasts, and foundational documents of PTI to formulate an extensive worldview. This legitimized his diplomatic initiatives, galvanized home support, and contested accepted international conventions. It intricately combined elements of post-colonial critique, Islamic solidarity, economic justice, and defense of national sovereignty into a cohesive, albeit frequently contentious, worldview (Ali, 2021). Khan's speeches offered vision and emotion, while PTI's election manifesto 2018 functioned as its governing charter, supplied the systematic, programmatic foundation. It functioned as a social contract with the voters about foreign policy, converting charismatic language into tangible commitments.

Imran Khan's foreign policy signified a significant conceptual and strategic departure from traditional Pakistani statecraft. It pledged liberation from historical constraints, a reorientation of national priorities towards economic prosperity based on a vigorous affirmation of sovereignty in a multipolar context (Hussain, Ismail, Noorunneesa, & Amiry, 2024). A thorough critical examination uncovered that between this lofty ideal and its practical execution exist a substantial landscape of structural obstacles, institutional inconsistencies, and geopolitical

challenges. The conversion of charismatic rhetoric into sustainable governance was obstructed by interrelated problems. It revealed the constraints of ideological foreign policy in a complex, interdependent global landscape. These were not only tactical setbacks but essential tensions that ultimately limited the vision's feasibility and caused disintegration.

Key Speeches: National and International Engagement

Imran Khan's oratory served as the principal instrument for his foreign policy. His speeches were theatrical demonstrations of statecraft, intended to reshape Pakistan's character globally and to present intricate geopolitical matters in clear, morally infused language for a broad audience.

UN General Assembly Trilogy (2019, 2020, 2021)

Khan's addresses at UNGA constitute a significant trilogy, each successive address reinforcing Pakistan's position as a prominent advocate for the injustices encountered by the Muslim world.

- **2019: The Kashmir Ultimatum and Threat of Conflict:** In 2019, Imran Khan delivered a speech immediately following India's abrogation of Article 370, marked a significant intensification in Pakistan's strategy (Fareed, 2019). Khan transcended diplomatic complaints to issue a prophetic admonition of impending disaster and depicted grievance of 8 million individuals in an open prison in Kashmir (The New York Times, 2019). He charged the Indian leadership with espousing fascist doctrines, and asserted unequivocally: "When a nuclear-armed nation engages in a protracted conflict, the repercussions will extend well beyond its borders and it will have global repercussions" (Khan, 2019). This was not a request for mediation but a calculated attempt to internationalize the matter. It was a direct threat to world security, so it attracted UN Security Council's attention. Imran Khan articulated the fight in civilizational terms, interrogating whether the world would acquiesce to a "great power" as it did to Hitler, thereby establishing himself as the moral compass of a complacent international community (Khan, 2019).
- **2020: Unveiling Global Illicit Structures:** The pandemic-era video address of Imran Khan discussed the immediate problem to a structural critique. He adeptly connected two unrelated topics: illicit financial flows and climate justice (Jamal, 2020). He delivered a compelling economic criticism of neo-colonialism. He asserted that corrupt elites from impoverished nations, in collusion with Western financial institutions, laundered misappropriated riches that ought to have financed development (Miller, n.d.). He added that "these were the public funds," insisting on its repatriation as a means of reparative justice (Khan, 2020). Regarding climate, he versed conventional narrative: Pakistan, accounting for less than 1% of global emissions, ranks among the foremost victims of climate change (Khan, 2020). His billion-tree tsunami was introduced not merely as a national initiative but as a paradigm of restorative ecology for polluted nations (United Nations Environment Programme, n.d.). His speech re-contextualized Pakistan from a security issue to a victim of global structural inequalities.
- **2021: Synthesizing the Doctrine of *Islamophobia* and Pragmatic Engagement:** The 2021 address of Imran Khan was his most refined ideological contribution. He devoted much time to delineating *Islamophobia* as a sanctioned, state-endorsed bias that had proliferated since 9/11, resulting in discrimination, radicalization, and bloodshed (Javaid, Khan, Kaur, & Qazalbash, 2022). He advocated for universal

standards to combat it, similar to legislation prohibiting Holocaust denial. He aimed to integrate the struggle against anti-Muslim bias within international human rights frameworks (Khan, 2021). He critically connected this to Afghanistan, contending that a strategy of intimidation and isolation against the Taliban would replicate historical errors. His call for involvement was articulated as a stringent security necessity for the West. He added that if the global community incentivizes Afghanistan, it would bolster the forces of peace. However, if it disregards Afghanistan, it will certainly bolster the forces of conflict (Khan, 2021). This illustrated a fundamental element of his idea, integrating moral arguments with realistic security alerts.

National Address on Foreign Policy

In March 2022, in a broadcast address, Khan presented the backdrop of the Ukraine conflict and significant Western pressure. It was probably the pivotal point of Khan's diplomatic narrative, which was a visceral, poignant, and overtly anti-colonial polemic. The primary phrase "Are we your slaves?" struck a profound chord inside a post-colonial consciousness (NDTV, 2022).

In the same month, Khan painstakingly crafted a historical account of treachery. Pakistan's involvement in the Soviet-Afghan conflict fostered a "gun and drug culture," while the post-9/11 alliance resulted in 80,000 Pakistani fatalities and significant internal migration. He added Pakistan was designated as allies but we were, in fact, being exploited (Dawn, 2022a). This historical lesson was utilized to substantiate his theory of "absolute neutrality" (Achakzai, 2022) as he characterized the journey to Moscow not as an endorsement of Russia, but as a sovereign prerogative to interact with all states for national advantage, notably referencing the necessity for affordable oil and wheat (Strat News Global, 2022).

Khan's address adeptly linked foreign policy to domestic economic concerns, contending that an autonomous foreign policy would immediately reduce inflation for the average individual. It also presented the powerful, politically charged assertion of a "foreign conspiracy" aimed at overthrowing his administration through a no-confidence vote, positioning his internal political conflict (Iqbal, Shahzad, Ali, Aslam, & Asif, 2023).

Discourses in Islamic Forums: The Initiative for Pan-Islamic Renaissance

Khan's address at OIC (Arab News, 2019) and his intended involvement in the Malaysia Summit (Jamal, 2019) sought to re-establish Pakistan as the intellectual and moral head of the Muslim World, a role he believed had been relinquished to Gulf States with divergent agendas. He conveyed a sense of brotherly crisis and opportunity. Khan expressed sorrow over the collective punishment imposed on the Muslim world following 9/11 and the ensuing conflicts that divided nations along sectarian lines. During the OIC in Abu Dhabi, he not only enumerated issues but also articulated a framework for practical unity (Khan, 2019). He voiced for:

- **An Islamic Knowledge Corridor:** It would consolidate resources in research, technology, and education to counteract the deterioration of intellectual productivity.
- **An Islamic Debt Relief Initiative:** Wealthier Muslim nations would assist in alleviating the financial burdens of poorer nations.
- **A Unified Effort:** To combat Islamophobia worldwide and reduction of trade barriers to cultivate a self-sufficient local economic ecology less reliant on the West.

At OIC conference 2021, regarding Afghanistan he constituted a diplomatic triumph. Khan cautioned against a humanitarian catastrophe that could instigate a fresh refugee crisis and reignite terrorism, effectively persuading the fragmented OIC to create a humanitarian trust

fund and designate a special envoy. He added that “We have erred in the past by forsaking Afghanistan,” (Radio Pakistan, 2021) advocating for a recalibration towards engagement rather than alienation. This illustrated Khan’s capacity to convert Islamic unity into tangible, collective action on a crucial subject, thereby augmenting Pakistan’s significance in the Muslim world.

PTI’s Party Manifesto: The Tactical Framework Towards a Sovereign Foreign Policy

In manifesto, the foreign policy was clearly denounced the past. The process commenced with the identification of the issue in foreign policy that Pakistan remained as a frontline state in the conflicts of others, resulting in severe internal repercussions (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf [PTI], 2018). Its commitments were formulated as a definitive separation:

- **The Supremacy of Sovereignty and Non-Intervention:** The manifesto pledged to pursue an independent foreign policy, rejecting involvement in any regional or global conflict. This was a direct reaction to the perceived strains of War on Terror initiated by USA.
- **Economics as the Primary Catalyst:** It was stated in manifesto that economic and trade interests would be the primary emphasis of foreign policy. This was the campaign pledge about the geo-economic pivot, vowing to utilize Pakistan’s geographical position for regional connectivity.
- **Rebalancing as Policy:** It was clearly pledged the diversify Pakistan’s relationships, reducing reliance. This established the directive for engagement with Russia and the reconfiguration of relations with USA (PTI, 2018, p. 111).

Ideological Foundations: The Imperatives

This pragmatic framework of PTI had two essential ideological convictions that underpinned the PTI’s nationalist and Islamic credentials:

- **Kashmir:** This transcended conventional endorsement and vowed to vigorously advocate the Kashmir issue including at the UN Security Council, and to diplomatically marginalize India for its conduct. In this narrative, it also committed to review the Most Favored Nation trade designation, which was later rescinded.
- **Palestine:** The commitment about Palestine was articulated as a principled stance against occupation and injustice, ensuring that the party’s foreign policy maintained a fundamental Islamic validity beyond immediate national concerns (PTI, 2018, p. 112).

Bilateral Relations: The Anticipated Reconfigurations

The manifesto delineated explicit, contractual commitments for essential partnerships including:

- **United States:** PTI would reassess terms of engagement, to guarantee a mutually advantageous partnership based on sovereignty and dignity. This signaled the commencement of a more combative, transactional strategy.
- **China:** To expedite CPEC and evolve it into CPEC-Plus, manifesto emphasized on industry relocation, agricultural modernization, and socio-economic advancement. This ensured a more profound and comprehensive integration of CPEC.
- **Afghanistan:** It was clarified that PTI would actively endorse all initiatives for a politically negotiated resolution, designating Pakistan as a “facilitator, not a guarantor.”
- **India:** In case of India, dialogue would be pursued only if India exhibits a readiness to resolve the Kashmir issue (PTI, 2018, pp. 113–114).

The strength of Khan’s vision resided in its internal consistency and emotional impact. The speeches and manifesto established a self-perpetuating ecosystem as the UNGA addresses

globalized the manifesto's themes of injustice. The national addresses localized global struggles into a quest for self-respect. The Islamic speeches forged a partnership to realize pan-Islamic objectives. These narratives significantly influenced the development of a new diplomatic awareness in Pakistan. It also established sovereignty, economic justice, and Islamic solidarity as the prevailing terminology in foreign policy discourse (Falki & Asrar, 2023).

Nevertheless, the relationship between this potent expression and concrete results was intricate as the hyperbole frequently exceeded diplomatic capabilities. The appeal for Islamic unity confronted the stark realities of the strategic interests of Gulf. The request for a respectful relationship with the US deteriorated into profound economic hostility. The inflexible, principle-driven position on Kashmir led to a diplomatic impasse.

The vision was exclusively based on immediate results. Imran Khan's oratory and party narrative irrevocably transformed the parameters of political exchange in Pakistan. They created a novel, populist standard for defining a patriotic foreign policy. It was characterized by resolute autonomy, direct connection to citizen welfare, and unabashed support for Islamic objectives.

Critical Evaluation and Implementation Difficulties

The Ideological Divide

Khan's foreign policy fundamentally constituted an ideological initiative aimed at the restoration of national sovereignty, but Pakistani state operated within an unavoidable network of global financial systems and security dependencies. It fundamentally restricted complete authority that resulted in a continual and frequently incapacitating disparity between theory and implementation.

The Sovereign's Dilemma: The IMF and Dependency

A prominent paradox, IMF, surfaced in economic governance. Khan's public position was to eschew the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which he saw as a tool of neo-colonial domination enforcing economic slavery via stringent austerity measures (Kugelman, 2019). This attitude was entirely consistent with his sovereign approach, but by mid-2019, dwindling foreign reserves provided no alternative. The ensuing negotiation and execution of a \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) represented a significant, public setback for unrestricted sovereignty. The government was necessitated to enact a series of politically detrimental reforms. The energy price increased, a market-driven currency rate, and elevated taxation was seen under direct IMF oversight (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2022).

The contradiction manifested in real-time while Prime Minister Khan publicly denounced the Fund's unjust conditions at political rallies. His Finance Minister, Shaukat Tarin, was in Washington or participating in virtual negotiations to obtain waivers and the subsequent tranche (Iqbal, 2021). This duality engendered policy schizophrenia, diminished investor confidence, and exposed a harsh reality. It was obvious that sovereignty could not supersede the structural power of global capital. Pakistan's incorporation into the global financial system was not a voluntary decision but a prerequisite for its survival. It compelled the government to adhere to externally established regulations.

The Illusion of Decoupled Security

The commitment to transition from geopolitics to geo-economics suggested a diminishment of conventional, security-oriented partnerships but these were found to be impossible to detach. The public discord with Washington, clandestine intelligence and counterterrorism collaboration regarding entities such as ISIS-Khorasan and al-Qaeda persisted, enabled through military and intelligence conduits (Fair, 2018). The US continued to be Pakistan's principal export market and a predominant influence in multilateral financial institutions.

The independent strategy was strangely supported by financial assistance from the Gulf. Billions of dollars in cash deposits from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, coupled with deferred oil payment arrangements. These steps were crucial in averting default (Karim, 2023). This financial dependency discreetly yet decisively impacted policy, especially concerning Yemen and wider Middle East (Haider & Khan, 2021). The notion of a clean break was therefore illusory and state remained entangled in a web of security and financial dependencies. These factors obstructed the merely transactional, dignity-centered connections which Khan anticipated.

Navigating the Establishment: The Inconsistent Consensus

In Pakistan, the military establishment served as the paramount authority on national security policy and oversees critical bilateral relations, particularly with the U.S., China, and Afghanistan (Ahmed, 2010). Khan's administration was characterized by an initial phase of notable civil-military concord but this obstructed underlying tensions on the trajectory and execution of foreign policy.

Domains of Strategic Convergence

On various matters, Khan's political vision and the military's strategic considerations coincided flawlessly especially the stringent position on Kashmir following August 2019 presented a cohesive national policy. The advocacy for a political resolution in Afghanistan coincided with military's view about secure western frontier was essential. The enhancement of the China relationship with security aspects of CPEC was a shared objective. The military's security framework was pivotal in enabling the US-Taliban negotiations, supplying the leverage that Khan's diplomacy publicly advocated (U.S. Congress, n.d.).

Divergence in Style and Substance

Divergences arose in tone with established partners and the administration of new coalitions. The military sought a more equitable relationship with US sustained a professional, discreet discussion with the Pentagon and US central command (Gul, Naseem, Khan, & Zaman, 2025). Imran Khan's publically denunciation of the US charging it with ingratitude and conspiracy against him was perceived by certain establishment factions as imprudent, unnecessarily severing ties with an entity that wielded significant power over international financial institutions and global diplomacy (Independent, 2021).

The military sustained its own discreet communications with Gulf partners and China, as a "parallel diplomacy." This occasionally resulted in contradicting signals when the Foreign Ministry expressed a perspective on Afghanistan; the intelligence services communicated distinct subtleties to the Taliban. Such kind of duality perplexed international partners and undermined the consistency of the official foreign policy stance (Haqqani, 2013). The culmination of this tension was the purported discord regarding the management of the Russia-Ukraine crisis and the visit to Moscow. It was not entirely aligned with the establishment's evaluation of the associated risks.

The Western Recoil: Transition from Ally to Outcast

Khan's aggressive stance and his policies elicited escalating criticism and estrangement from Western capitals, converting diplomatic tensions into a detrimental isolation with significant economic and political repercussions.

Afghanistan and the "Blame Game" Impasse

Following the Taliban's ascendance, Western frustration with the two-decade unsuccessful conflict identified Pakistan as a suitable scapegoat. Khan commemorated the dismantling of "shackles" and asserted that the Taliban had "shattered the chains of slavery". It was interpreted in Washington and European capitals as exuberant triumphalism (Dawn, 2021). His

administration's engagement with the Taliban, rather than exerting pressure, was characterized as appeasement. This narrative eclipsed Pakistan's security apprehensions and its involvement in enabling the retreat. The outcome was a diplomatic stalemate, with Pakistan omitted from crucial international discussions over Afghanistan. It subjected to persistent public censure from individuals such as Antony Blinken, Secretary of State (U.S. Embassy & Consulates, 2021).

The Moscow Visit

Prime Minister Imran Khan's meeting with President Vladimir Putin on February 24, 2022, (Prime Minister Office, 2022) constituted the most detrimental action for Pakistan's relations with the collective West. Despite Pakistan's assertions of neutrality and bilateral necessity, the optics was disastrous. Amidst Europe's largest land conflict since 1945, Khan was seen in cordial interaction with the Russian president (Shams, 2022). This immediately categorized Pakistan as doubtful in Western diplomatic circles, straining political relations and endangering economic connections. The European Parliament later adopted resolutions challenging Pakistan's qualification for GSP+ trade status, expressly referencing its foreign affiliations (Salik& Khan, 2022).

The Governance Deficit

Khan's victory was initially seen positively in the West as a democratic transition, but criticism intensified after his administration's actions. The alleged weaponization of anti-corruption agencies against political adversaries, coercion of independent media, and an antagonistic approach towards state institutions were the main issues (Khan &Ghumman, 2023). The deterioration in political rights and civil liberties was witnessed which undermined the democratic legitimacy that had been a crucial source of soft power (Freedom House, 2019). Western nations' perception of his foreign policy was not principled independence, but rather the capricious tactics of an increasingly intolerant leader (Ahmed, n.d.).

The Economic Imperative: When the Treasury Instructs the Chancellery

In 2021, economic crisis marked by double-digit inflation, dwindling reserves, and an escalating current account deficit emerged as the primary influence on foreign policy (Dar, 2021). Similarly, grand strategic visions were overshadowed by the pressing necessity for financial triage.

The Shift from Grand Strategy to Crisis Management

Diplomacy became important by a frantic pursuit of financial resources. The Foreign Minister's agenda was primarily focused on shuttle diplomacy to Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Doha. It was not to address Islamic unity or regional mediation, but to advocate for the extension of existing loans and the acquisition of new funds (Dawn, 2021a). The aspiration of Pakistan for regional connectivity was overshadowed by the pressing reality of its role as a supplicant for Gulf liquidity. This stance postured less diplomatic flexibility and political leverage for the proactive, ambitious reforms that Khan had advocated (The Arab Weekly, 2019).

The Erosion of Principles

Economic imperatives necessitated compromises that undermined fundamental ideological positions. The steadfast unwillingness to engage in trade with India without a resolution on Kashmir clearly contradicted the economic rationale though the trade could provide less expensive food and medicine from across the border. In 2021, the Cabinet as well as Finance Minister publicly endorsed the reopening of trade, specifically referencing inflationary pressures (Al Jazeera, 2021). Although the proposal was ultimately vetoed, the discourse revealed how economic vulnerability necessitated a reassessment of even the most revered foreign policy principles (Ghilzai, 2021). The requirement for an IMF agreement prompted a

discreet, behind-the-scenes moderation of anti-American discourse in official communications to obtain Washington's backing at the Fund's board.

The Diaspora: A Success Despite, Not Because Of, Strategy

The geo-economic triumph, record remittances surpassing \$31 billion annually, was ironically less a consequence of strategic state diplomacy and more a result of global macroeconomic dynamics and specific, technocratic financial incentives such as the State Bank's Roshan Digital Account scheme (State Bank of Pakistan, 2022). This underscored a paradox: the most effective influx of foreign currency was facilitated not by state-to-state agreements or connectivity corridors. It was by the individual choices of millions of migrant workers, largely detached from the government's high-level foreign policy.

The Personalization Trap: A Vision Disconnected from Institutions

The primary mistake was the over-personalization of foreign policy while Khan's charismatic leadership served as the driving force. It simultaneously constituted a significant risk, as the vision lacked sufficient institutionalization and protection from political instability.

Volatility and Inconsistency

The distinction between statesman and political campaigner had become perilously ambiguous. A well formulated diplomatic stance expressed by the Foreign Office was disrupted after some hours by Imran Khan at a political rally when the most detrimental instance was the public disclosure of the foreign conspiracy through a diplomatic cipher. He converted a delicate diplomatic communication into a domestic political instrument and precipitating an international incident (Yousaf, 2022). This engendered a perception of instability and unpredictability among foreign partners. They became uncertain whether they were engaging with the state of Pakistan or the leader of the PTI.

The Deterioration of Civilian Institutions

The emphasis on Khan's direct, personal diplomacy, whether at the UN, in bilateral summits, or through media engagements, negatively impacted the enhancement of foreign policy (Hussain et al., 2024). The former diplomats of Foreign Ministry frequently expressed dissatisfaction regarding their marginalization, as their expertise was disregarded in favor of a select group of political advisors (Alam, 2021). Significant strategic decisions seemed to be made without comprehensive inter-ministerial consultation or long-term scenario analysis. This undermined the institutional capacity required to maintain a sophisticated foreign policy beyond leader's term.

Strategic Myopia and Absence of Planning

The vision was not subjected to rigorous evaluation in light of significant geopolitical upheavals and domestic political transformations that established a secure foundation for implementing a long-term rebalancing. The Ukraine conflict constituted an exogenous shock that significantly transformed the global environment. It hindered Pakistan's engagement with Russia (Noor, 2025). The vision provided no provision for Khan's own ousting from office. In early 2022, the convergence of eco-political difficulties resulted in his downfall, causing the foreign policy framework to disintegrate alongside him. There was no profound institutional commitment from the deep state to uphold its fundamental principles. These had never been thoroughly institutionalized beyond his individual lobbying.

Imran Khan's foreign policy was a daring initiative. It effectively identified numerous issues stemming from Pakistan's historical interactions with the global community. It articulated a profound national yearning for respect and autonomy, but its execution revealed the significant challenges of converting a populist, ideologically motivated vision into the routine governance of a mid-sized, economically precarious state in a contested area (Hussain et al., 2024). It

overestimated the capacity for maneuver within a rigorous international system. It also miscalculated the rigidity of established security and financial dependence, and failed to harmonize the necessity of sovereign dignity with the demands of economic survival (Hussain et al., 2024).

The project ultimately failed not because of flawed objectives, but due to the absence of implementation theory. It favored political discourse over bureaucratic implementation, ideological consistency over practical coalition formation as well as individual authority above institutional robustness. The legacy was dialectical: it irrevocably transformed the discourse of Pakistani foreign policy, integrating the concepts of geo-economics and sovereignty into public awareness (Jahanzaib & Khan, 2024). It concurrently revealed, through its inherent limitations, the substantial structural and institutional obstacles that any future administration would encounter in striving to achieve that vision.

Conclusion

This research analyzed the correlation between Imran Khan's foreign policy and its execution during his term as Prime Minister. By examining his speeches, official declarations, and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) manifesto, the research reveals that Khan articulated a cohesive and aspirational foreign policy vision, but its execution was only moderately effective due to several complexities of foreign policy formulation in Pakistan.

A hallmark of Imran Khan's foreign policy was autonomy, sovereignty, and principle-driven diplomatic approach where ties founded on mutual respect, equality, and national interests instead of relying on any dominant country. He aimed to reshape Pakistan's global identity, but the execution was significantly more challenging due to Pakistan's economic fragilities, reliance on global financial entities, regional security issues, and enduring strategic alliances. Imran Khan's influence was undoubtedly more transformative and lasting as he effectively democratized foreign policy, transitioning it from the domain of specialized knowledge to the core of public political discourse. The geo-economics, sovereign foreign policy, and dignity had entered the political lexicon as well as established a new standard for patriotic governance. He harnessed a profound, post-colonial desire for recognition, clearly articulated the connection between foreign policy and national self-esteem.

His administration concluded the necessity for commerce, investment, and energy security. Khan's contribution was to rhetorically establish this as the primary aim of diplomacy, a conceptual shift that is likely irreversible. Khan elevated public expectations for gestures of sovereignty. Any anticipated concession to external pressure from the IMF, the US, or other entities would be politically exploited by opposition factions, perhaps spearheaded by Khan himself. This established a more restricted setting for pragmatic, covert diplomacy, potentially compelling leaders into performative resistance that may not benefit the national interest.

Khan's administration illustrated the potential and constraints of a civilian leader pursuing a populist foreign policy agenda. It emphasized that although the military maintains dominance over fundamental security matters, a charismatic civilian leader could take the lead in influencing diplomatic discourse, moral advocacy, and economic engagement. Imran Khan's foreign policy was an ambitious, ideologically-driven experiment that functioned more as a discursive revolution than as a fully developed, sustainable strategic doctrine.

His policy eloquently expressed a profound critique of history and a persuasive vision of sovereign dignity, but it was ultimately limited by the unchangeable truths of economic interdependence, institutional path-dependencies, and the relentless calculations of global power. Consequently, its legacy did not establish a definitive new trajectory for Pakistan, but

rather engendered a compelling array of inquiries, an elevated public awareness, and intensified tensions. It would shape the nation's global interactions for the foreseeable future. The aspiration for a proudly independent, geo-economically-driven Pakistan persists. The practical strategy to realize it in the face of global adversities is the unresolved challenge he has left for the future.

References

- Achakzai, J. (2022, April 11). *SC saves Pakistan from civil war and economic meltdown*.
- Ahmed, N. (2010). Military and the foreign policy of Pakistan. *South Asian Survey*, 17(2), 313–330.
- Ahmed, S. (n.d.). *Imran Khan's fall: Political and security implications for Pakistan*. International Crisis Group. Retrieved December 2, 2025, from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>
- Al Jazeera. (2021, April 1). *Pakistan defers India trade restarting decision over Kashmir*.
- Alam, S. (2021, May 7). *Imran Khan's comments irk Pakistan's foreign officials, former diplomats*. *Eastern Eye*.
- Ali, A. (2021). Identifying political global ideology in Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan's speech at United Nations General Assembly. *Perennial Journal of History*, 2(1), 49–60.
- Arab News. (2019, June 1). *PM Imran Khan delivers keynote speech at the 14th OIC Summit in Makkah*.
- Dar, M. I. (2021, October 25). *How the PTI government's policies fueled unprecedented inflation*. *The Friday Times*.
- Dawn. (2021, April 13). *Germany to enhance economic ties with Pakistan*.
- Dawn. (2021, December 13). *National security more than just about military power, encompasses inclusive growth: PM Imran*.
- Dawn. (2022, March 31). *'Neither you nor your handlers will be forgiven,' PM Imran warns 'sell-outs' ahead of no-trust vote*.
- Fair, C. C. (2018). *In their own words: Understanding Lashkar-e-Tayyaba* (p. 111). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Falki, S. M., & Asrar, S. (2023). Interplay of language, power and political discourses in foreign policy of Pakistan: Case study of speech diplomacy of Imran Khan. *Journal of Politics and International Studies*, 9(1), 91–104.
- Fareed, R. (2019, September 29). *'We're not alone': Besieged Kashmiris hail Imran Khan's UN speech*. Al Jazeera.
- Freedom House. (2019). *Freedom in the world 2019: Pakistan*. Retrieved December 2, 2025, from <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2019>
- Ghilzai, R. (2021, April 1). *Pakistan defers decision to resume trade with India*. *The Express Tribune*.
- Gul, H., Naseem, I., Khan, M. B., & Zaman, K. (2025). Assessing the impact of US economic aid and military support on the strategic dynamics of Pakistan's foreign policy: A study of diplomatic relations and public sentiment. *Future Business Journal*, 11(1), 1–18.
- Haider, S. K., & Khan, I. (2021). Recent trends in Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Middle East. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(4), 5797–5805.
- Haqqani, H. (2013). *Magnificent delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an epic history of misunderstanding* (p. 138). New York, NY: PublicAffairs.
- Hussain, S., Ismail, M., Noorunneasa, & Amiry, A. A. (2024). Imran Khan's foreign policy doctrine: Challenges and prospects on the global stage (2018–2022). *The International Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Learning*, 31(1), 169–178.
- Independent. (2021, September 25). *Imran Khan paints Pakistan as victim of US ungratefulness*.



- International Monetary Fund. (2022). *Pakistan: Seventh and eighth reviews of the extended arrangement under the extended fund facility, requests for waivers of nonobservance of performance criteria, and for extension, augmentation, and rephasing of access*. Retrieved November 30, 2025, from <https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/cr/2022/english/1pakea2022002.pdf>
- Iqbal, A. (2021, October 22). *Shaukat Tarin leaves US without concluding IMF negotiations*. Dawn.
- Iqbal, H., Shahzad, D. M. N., Ali, U., Aslam, S., & Asif, M. (2023). No confidence politics in Pakistan: A historical analysis. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 7(1), 869–881.
- Jahanzaib, M., & Khan, M. (2024). The impacts of the intended transition of Pakistan from geo-politics to geo-economics. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal*, 8(2), 60–82.
- Jamal, S. (2020, September 26). *Imran Khan highlights Pakistan's COVID-19 success story, climate change in UN address*. Gulf News.
- Jamal, U. (2019, December 20). *The Kuala Lumpur Summit 2019 shows Pakistan's diplomatic subservience to Saudi Arabia*. *The Diplomat*.
- Javid, M., Khan, M. H., Kaur, S., & Qazalbash, F. (2022). Islamophobia in the West: A critical discourse analysis of Imran Khan's UNGA speech. *Religions*, 13(4), 1–16.
- Karim, U. (2023). Pakistan and Saudi ties: An overview of political, strategic, economic and defense linkages. In U. Karim & S. Kapur (Eds.), *Regional security in South Asia and the Gulf* (pp. 152–179). London, England: Routledge.
- Khan, I. (2019, March 1–2). *Keynote address at the 46th Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation*. Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- Khan, I. (2019, September 27). *Pakistan—Prime Minister addresses general debate, 74th session* [Video]. United Nations Web TV. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1f/k1fh15mjyq>
- Khan, I. (2020, September 25). *Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan addresses the general debate of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly* [Video]. United Nations Web TV. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1m/k1mnufh11z>
- Khan, I. (2021, September 24). *Pakistan—Prime Minister addresses general debate, 76th session* [Video]. United Nations Web TV. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1o/k1oa5fghs1>
- Khan, L. A., & Ghumman, H. (2023, May 11). *Imran Khan and the weaponization of litigation by Pakistan's elite*. *JURIST*.
- Kugelman, M. (2019, June 18). *A bitter pill to swallow for Imran Khan*. *East Asia Forum*.
- Miller, P. (n.d.). *Imran Khan: West gains from corruption*. Declassified UK. Retrieved November 24, 2025, from <https://www.declassifieduk.org/imran-khan-west-gains-from-corruption/>
- NDTV. (2022, March 6). *"Are we your slaves?" Pak PM slams Western envoys' joint letter on Russia*.
- Noor, R. (2025). Russia-Ukraine crises and its impact on Pakistan. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(1), 818–829.
- Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. (2018). *Election manifesto 2018* (Chap. 12, Foreign Policy, pp. 110–113). Islamabad, Pakistan: PTI Central Secretariat.
- Prime Minister Office. (2022, February 24). *Prime Minister Imran Khan's summit meeting with President Vladimir V. Putin*.
- Radio Pakistan. (2021, December 19). *PM calls for devising immediate strategy to address humanitarian situation in Afghanistan*. Retrieved November 27, 2025, from <https://www.radio.gov.pk/19-12-2021/pm-calls-for-devising-immediate-strategy-to-address-humanitarian-situation-in-afghanistan>
- Salik, M. A. N., & Khan, M. T. F. (2022, June 24). *Pakistan's GSP+ status and the road ahead*. Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI).



- Shams, S. (2022, February 25). *Why Imran Khan's Russia trip will further isolate Pakistan*. *Deutsche Welle (DW)*.
- State Bank of Pakistan. (2022). *State Bank of Pakistan annual report 2021–22: The state of Pakistan's economy* (p. 50). Karachi, Pakistan: State Bank of Pakistan.
- Strat News Global. (2022, March 4). *'Need wheat and gas': Imran Khan justifies Russia visit*.
- The Arab Weekly. (2019, January 13). *Strong Arab Gulf support for Pakistan frustrates Iran's plans, boosts Khan*.
- The New York Times. (2019, September 26). *Imran Khan warns of Kashmir 'blood bath' in emotional U.N. speech*.
- U.S. Congress. (n.d.). *Afghanistan: Background and U.S. policy in brief*. Retrieved December 1, 2025, from <https://www.congress.gov/>
- U.S. Embassy & Consulates. (2021, September 3). *Secretary Antony J. Blinken remarks on Afghanistan at a press availability*. Retrieved December 1, 2025, from <https://it.usembassy.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-remarks-on-afghanistan-at-a-press-availability/>
- United Nations Environment Programme. (n.d.). *Pakistan's Ten Billion Tree Tsunami*. Retrieved November 26, 2025, from <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/pakistans-ten-billion-tree-tsunami>
- Yousaf, K. (2022, July 19). *FO rubbishes claims ex-PM, FM kept in dark about 'cypher'*. *The Express Tribune*.