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GFPR
GLOBAL FOREIGN
POLICIES REVIEW

p-ISSN: 2788-502X
e-ISSN: 2788-5038

GFPR

GLOBAL FOREIGN POLICIES REVIEW

HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

DOI (Journal): 10.31703/gfpr

DOI (Volume): 10.31703/gfpr/.2025(VIII)

DOI (Volume): 10.31703/gfpr/.2025(VIII.I)



VOL. VIII, ISSUE I, WINTER (MARCH-2025)

Double-blind Peer-review Research Journal

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Article Title

Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis

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Keywords: Pakistan, DPRK (Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea), Republic of Korea, Nuclear Program, Economic Ties

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Pages: 1-7

DOI: 10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I).01

DOI link: [https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2025\(VIII-I\).01](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I).01)

Article link: <https://gfprjournal.com/article/pakistan-relations-with-the-republic-of-korea-and-democratic-peoples-republic-of-korea-a-comparative-analysis>

Full-text Link: <https://gfprjournal.com/fulltext/pakistan-relations-with-the-republic-of-korea-and-democratic-peoples-republic-of-korea-a-comparative-analysis>

Pdf link: <https://www.humapub.com/admin/alljournals/gfpr/papers/Kg8bAwp7Mb.pdf>

Global Foreign Policies Review

p-ISSN: [2788-502X](https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr) e-ISSN: [2788-5038](https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr)

DOI(journal):10.31703/gfpr

Volume: VIII (2025)

DOI (volume):10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII)

Issue: I Winter (March-2025)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I)

Home Page

www.gfprjournal.com

Volume: VIII (2025)

<https://www.gfprjournal.com/Current-issue>

Issue: I-Winter (March-2025)

<https://www.gfprjournal.com/issue/8/1/2025>

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Citing this Article

01	Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis		
Authors	Tehseena Masood Afira Mujeeb Ghulam Mustafa	DOI	10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I).01
		Pages	1-7
		Year	2025
		Volume	VIII
		Issue	I
Referencing & Citing Styles			
APA	Masood, T., Mujeeb, A., & Mustafa, G. (2025). Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis. <i>Global Foreign Policies Review</i> , VIII(I), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I).01		
CHICAGO	Masood, Tehseena, Afira Mujeeb, and Ghulam Mustafa. 2025. "Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis." <i>Global Foreign Policies Review</i> VIII (I):1-7. doi: 10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I).01.		
HARVARD	MASOOD, T., MUJEEB, A. & MUSTAFA, G. 2025. Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis. <i>Global Foreign Policies Review</i> , VIII, 1-7.		
MHRA	Masood, Tehseena, Afira Mujeeb, and Ghulam Mustafa. 2025. 'Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis', <i>Global Foreign Policies Review</i> , VIII: 1-7.		
MLA	Masood, Tehseena, Afira Mujeeb, and Ghulam Mustafa. "Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis." <i>Global Foreign Policies Review</i> VIII.I (2025): 1-7. Print.		
OXFORD	Masood, Tehseena, Mujeeb, Afira, and Mustafa, Ghulam (2025), 'Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis', <i>Global Foreign Policies Review</i> , VIII (I), 1-7.		
TURABIAN	Masood, Tehseena, Afira Mujeeb, and Ghulam Mustafa. "Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis." <i>Global Foreign Policies Review</i> VIII, no. I (2025): 1-7. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I).01 .		





Global Foreign Policies Review

www.gfprjournal.com

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gfpr>



Pages: 1-7

URL: [https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2025\(VIII-I\).01](https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I).01)

Doi: 10.31703/gfpr.2025(VIII-I).01



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Title

Pakistan Relations with the Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to elucidate Pakistan's relations with North and South Korea. A number of intrinsic restrictions need to be taken into consideration while comparing Pakistan's diplomatic ties with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK). First of all, because of concerns over politics and information control in both the DPRK and the ROK, obtaining thorough and up-to-date information from diplomatic sources is extremely difficult. Pakistan with South Korea and North Korea have historical relations when they established mutual respect and trust. A strong economic alliance has been paved with years of trade and investment cooperation. By recognizing the complexity of diplomatic relations between Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and aiming for thorough and perceptive research, addressing these constraints has improved the subject matter.

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Introduction

The aim of this research symbolizes that Pakistan's ties with the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) have borne internal inconsistency as well as foreign pressure. Pakistan wants defense cooperation from its allies to sustain balance both internally and externally, as well as financial and diplomatic assistance. Pakistan can improve its standing on the international scene and more adeptly negotiate the intricacies of global interdependence by recognizing and interacting with the larger international context. This entails being aware of how governance structures,

economic developments, and world events affect Pakistan and actively engaging in international discourse and decision-making (Hippler & Ahmed, 2022).

The connectivity between the Republic of Korea and Pakistan has become stronger throughout the entire years, along with trade and investment, socioeconomic growth, human resource development, defense, and cultural exchanges. Consistent institutional frameworks guarantee continuous strategic communication among the nations. The strengthening relationships are seen in the rise in recent official engagements, cultural exchanges, and high-level visits. Notably, Pakistan presented its culture to the



Korean people last year as the featured nation at the Migrant Multicultural Festival (MAMF). Pakistan's nuclear trade with North Korea does not go against any international treaties because it is not part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). But Islamabad smashed agreements with the United States and the world community to maintain non-proliferation norms. Northeast Asia may become unstable because of this encouragement of North Korea's violation of the NPT and the Agreed Framework. Finally, Pakistan's actions demonstrate how ineffective sanctions might be in attaining non-proliferation. In the 1990s, Pakistan was subject to U.S. sanctions, which had the unintended consequence of driving Pakistan to look for other means of developing its nuclear capabilities.

Warmth and respect for one another have always defined the relationship between Pakistan and South Korea, encouraging collaboration in a variety of disciplines. The foreign ministers of Pakistan and South Korea discussed the long history of their bilateral relations, which include solid economic alliances, cooperative development initiatives, and close socio-cultural links. They also recognized the important role that each of their various diasporas played in bridging the two countries' friendships. Acknowledging the bright prospects for forthcoming cooperation, the foreign ministers pledged to augment cooperation throughout diverse domains. They underscored the significance of enhancing political, economic, cultural, and interpersonal contacts, highlighting their common goal of flourishing and win-win cooperation in the future (Radio Pakistan, 2023).

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are:

- Pakistan's diplomatic ties to the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) remain stable in the case of external as well as internal challenges.
- To sustain stability and accomplish its foreign policy goals, Pakistan varies on the financial, political, and defense cooperation of its allies.
- To evaluate the credibility of allegations regarding Pakistan's sharing of nuclear technology with North Korea and its impact on diplomatic ties.

Literature Review

Related reviews about the research are as follows:

The study "*Pakistan's Diplomatic Ties with the Republic of Korea: A Critical Analysis*" by Masood, Mustafa, & Gul-E-Zahra (2024), offers a thorough examination of Pakistan's diplomatic ties with the Republic of Korea (ROK), covering both significant historical events and the present situation. Since its establishment in 1983, the two

countries diplomatic relations have developed into a complex partnership characterized by strategic discussions, cultural exchanges, and economic cooperation. At first, commerce and economic cooperation were the main priorities of the relationship. Through a number of efforts, such as cooperative ventures, trade agreements, and high-level visits, both nations have actively worked to increase their engagement throughout the years. Electronics, textiles, and machinery are important areas of cooperation where both countries have sought to increase bilateral commerce by utilizing their unique advantages. Both nations have recently had to deal with new opportunities and problems throughout the world, which has led them to look for creative methods to improve their cooperation. This includes working together on regional and international issues like technology exchange, security concerns, and sustainable development (Masood, Mustafa, & Gul-E-Zahra, 2024).

In "*Korea Herald, Pakistan Discuss 40th Anniversary of Ties*" by Kumar (2023), It is stated that during a courtesy visit to Herald Corp, Pakistani Ambassador to Korea Nabeel Munir and CEO of The Korea Herald Choi Jin-young, exchanged greetings. In a meeting with Korea Herald CEO Choi Jin-young, Pakistan's ambassador to Korea exchanged ideas on how to mark the 40th anniversary of Pakistan-Korea ties this year. Nabeel Munir proposed enhancing media collaboration through content exchange, facilitating commerce at all levels, and promoting people-to-people connections through tourism during his courtesy visit to The Korea Herald. In November 1983, Pakistan and South Korea forged diplomatic ties. According to Munir, Korean businesses have heavily invested in Pakistan; he gave the examples of Kia and Lotte. He hoped that Korean businesses would continue to invest and that bilateral commerce would be encouraged. Additionally, he showed a dedication to showcasing Pakistan's tourist potential to Koreans, highlighting the country's mountains, deserts, oceans, and Buddhist legacy, which includes Gandhara art. To bolster the historical ties between Pakistan and Korea, Munir emphasized that "Buddhism came to Korea from Pakistan." The bilateral trade between Pakistan and Korea reached 1.69 billion in 2022, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs data (Kumar, 2023). I have focused on the specific plans or strategies to strengthen bilateral trade between Pakistan and Korea that are missing in the study.

The book "*North Korean Military Proliferation in the Middle East and Africa: Enabling Violence and Instability*" by BECHTOL, B. E. (2018), claims that North Korea is sometimes viewed as being isolated, and has a broad worldwide network. However, due to the difficulty in accessing official sources, little was known about North Korea's contacts with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Bruce E. Bechtol Jr. emphasizes that North Korea's military proliferation is a global issue, not just a

regional one, as it is financed by four main sources: Weapon of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile production, conventional weapon sales, the refurbishment of Soviet-era weapons, and technical and military assistance. Bechtol highlights Iran as North Korea's principal client and describes how North Korea supported Iran's conventional and nuclear weapons projects, notably after the 2003 dismantling of the Pakistani AQ Khan network. The growth of Iran's nuclear infrastructure was significantly aided by North Korea's competence in subterranean facilities. The Iranian nuclear weapons program was the subject of this cooperation at various periods BECHTOL, B. E. (2018). The gap that I have also considered is how North Korea's proliferation may affect international relations, non-proliferation efforts, and global security.

This article "Impact of Innovation on Economic Development: Cross Nation Comparison of Canada, South Korea and Pakistan" by Haq (2018), examines the impact of innovation on economic growth between 1990 and 2011 in Canada, South Korea, and Pakistan. It looks at elements including real Growth Domestic Product (GDP) growth, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Research and Development (R&D), exports of modern technology, patents, citizens, and scientific publications. Due to problems including poor domestic investment, political unrest, and educational inequalities, Pakistan's economic development has not been very noteworthy. The high Growth Domestic Product (GDP) of South Korea is attributable to investments in Research and Development (R&D) and human capital. Although Pakistan's Growth Domestic Product (GDP) is growing faster than Canada's, other aspects like economic equality, gender parity, stability, and justice are essential for total development. According to this study's findings, countries with higher levels of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Research and Development (R&D), exports, patent rights, and scientific publications are more advanced and inventive (Haq, 2018). A more thorough examination of the causative processes would be beneficial. How much these nations' economic expansion encourages more expenditures in R&D and technology developments, and how much the reverse happens is not discussed here.

In the book "South Korea Rise" by Heo & Roehrig (2014), although economic opportunities have led to improved ties between South Korea and India, officials of the two nations realized they had certain security worries in common as well. These worries originally centered on Pakistan and North Korea, their two main regional foes, cooperating in the development of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons technology. Since then, the security agenda has expanded to cover terrorism, piracy, and concerns about a rising China. This culminated in the signing of a Strategic Partnership agreement in January

2010. However, security cooperation has been scant, and much like economic connections, there is still much room for expansion. The exchange of ballistic missile technology was the initial point of convergence for cooperation between Pakistan and North Korea. Early in the 1980s, Pakistan launched a vigorous ballistic missile program, and Islamabad looked to North Korea for assistance. Beginning in the early 1980s, Pyongyang acquired a Scud B missile from Egypt, which its experts reverse-engineered to create a new model for its ballistic missile program. North Korea started developing the medium-range Nodong, a better Scud, at some point in 1988. Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto traveled to Pyongyang in 1993 to secure the handover of the Nodong missile, an intermediate-range weapon, for A.Q. Khan and his research facility. It is highly possible that Khan kept in touch with North Korea, even with Pakistani officials (Heo & Roehrig, 2014). This study did not explain to what extent the security cooperation initiatives between South Korea, India, Pakistan, and North Korea are constrained by historical hostility and competitiveness among them in terms of security.

"Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Escalation in Regional Conflicts: Lessons from North Korea and Pakistan" by Meyerle, Gause & Ostovar (2014). This study explores the potential impact of nuclear weapons on smaller nations' ability to conduct limited military operations and coercive actions, even at lower escalation levels. North Korea and Pakistan are the two situations that are highlighted. The study assesses the nuclear capabilities, methods, and doctrines of these countries by looking at trends in nuclear deterrence, current research on nuclear weapons and coercion, and formulating assumptions from this material. Additionally, it looks for cases of increasing coercion. The study deciphers common trends and offers recommendations for American policy and military strategy through these case studies (Meyerle, Gause, & Ostovar, 2014). This study did not explore whether there has been a major shift in North Korea's or Pakistan's nuclear posture since the research was done in 2014 and what effects have these changes had on regional stability and American policy.

Political Alignments

Tehmina Janjua met with Kang Kyung-Wha, her counterpart from South Korea, before the official talks. They talked about methods to improve trade, investment, education, cultural, and legislative exchanges as well as strategies to fortify cooperation between their nations during their conference. They carried out a thorough assessment of their bilateral relationship and identified many chances to strengthen it across a range of industries. Both parties discussed the potential for high-level visits to Pakistan during the consultations, which would strengthen their relationship even more. They

talked about topics related to regional security, such as the Korean Peninsula and South Asia. Apart from the formal discussions, Janjua also engaged in informal conversations with South Korean Pakistani community members. She acknowledged their important support for Pakistan's development endeavors and conveyed her gratitude for their donations to the dam fund. This involvement pointed out the strong contact that exists between Pakistanis living overseas and their country of origin, highlighting the community's contribution to the improvement of bilateral ties (The Express Tribune, [2018](#)).

The Republic of Korea's Consul General, Mr. Kim Haksung, was invited to give his opinion as a guest speaker at NHU recently with reference to the bilateral relations between South Korea and Pakistan. Mr. Kim gave a thoughtful speech during his visit that focused on the two nations' shared history, current state of economic cooperation, and promising future. To promote mutual understanding and develop bilateral connections, he underlined the value of educational and cultural interactions (Nazeer Hussain University, [2022](#)).

In the case of DPRK,

At the end of December, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto headed towards Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, amid escalating tensions. A large number of North Koreans lined the streets to welcome her at a lavish reception that was arranged despite the bitter cold. Bhutto expressed her displeasure with the American sanctions placed on North Korea and Pakistan over a state banquet. While stressing Pakistan's dedication to nuclear non-proliferation, she also supported states' rights to pursue peaceful nuclear development for social and economic advancement. Pakistani officials, both past and present, claim that Bhutto's group returned bearing designs for North Korea's Nodong missile. By April 1998, the Pakistani military, who had long sought these plans, had successfully tested an upgraded Nodong, which they called the Ghauri. With its 1,000-mile flight range, this missile allowed Pakistan to aim its nuclear warheads at a large portion of India. According to a former high-ranking Pakistani official, the Bhutto administration planned to use a secret "invisible account" to fund North Korea for these initiatives. But things quickly took a different turn. After Bhutto's visit, North Korea and the Clinton administration came to an agreement that stopped all nuclear activity at the Yongbyon complex, which is still under year-round observation by international investigators (Sanger, [2002](#)).

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif rejected any link between Pakistan and North Korea's alleged nuclear cooperation when questioned by the Clinton administration. South Korean intelligence did not discover any concrete evidence of North Korea obtaining

components until the overthrow of General Musharraf and the administration of President Bush.

Economic Ties

Pakistan, an extensive country with a diverse population, environment, way of life, and output, has a broad industrial base. Key crops like wheat, rice, sugarcane, and maize are produced by its dynamic agricultural industry, which also supplies raw materials to industries like cotton textiles, greatly boosting national wealth. Value addition in sectors such as dairy, fruits, meats, vegetables, animal breeding, livestock development, and horticulture are among the opportunities in agriculture.

Many Korean establishments have been operating successfully in Pakistan in numerous fields for an extended period. Well-known brands like KIA, Daewoo, LG, Hyundai, and Lotte are becoming prominent. Korean corporations have successfully collaborated and contributed to Pakistan's infrastructure by building and operating multiple hydroelectric projects. In the 1980s, Korea increased its investments in Pakistan; beginning with Daewoo, these investments have spread to industries like automotive, hydropower, chemicals, mobile manufacturing, and confectionery.

Pakistan has selected an initiative approach to reduce the effect of climate change since the Climate Change Act was issued in 2017. This has opened prospects for cooperation with Korea in the development of global climate response infrastructure. Korean producers of electric vehicles (EVs) and investors in the automotive industry stand to gain from Pakistan's developing EV and hybrid car markets as well as its quickly expanding motorbike industry. Korean solar enterprises have the option to work on solo or collaborative initiatives in this industry. Pakistan and the Korea Plant Industry Association (KOPIA) are already working together on a project to attain seed potato self-sufficiency by 2028. Korea's official development assistance programs indicate the country's dedication to encouraging Pakistan's socioeconomic rise. Several tasks in Pakistan have been assisted by Korea's Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) since 1991. The approximately 15,000-strong Pakistani spread in the Republic of Korea is important for the expanding of both cultural and economic links. Professionals, entrepreneurs, laborers, and students make up this community. Pakistani laborers make a substantial economic contribution to Korea, especially through the 2006 MOU for the Employment Permit System (EPS). Pakistan's EPS labor quota for 2024 is set at 4700 (Munir, [2024](#)).

In the case of DPRK,

Pakistan is determined to acquire a long-range nuclear strike capability, as evidenced by its purported nuclear trade with North Korea for Nodong ballistic

missiles. Islamabad maintained these contacts with Pyongyang at least until July 2002, even though doing so could have damaged its ties with the Bush administration. To construct a plant for enriching uranium, Pakistan took advantage of weak nuclear export regulations in the West in the late 1970s. President Zia used Pakistan's involvement in the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s to convince the Reagan administration to overlook Pakistan's nuclear aspirations. To get over strategic roadblocks in the 1990s, Pakistan exchanged critical nuclear data with North Korea in response to U.S. sanctions and technical denials. This barter agreement calls into doubt Islamabad's nuclear decision-making process. Evidence suggests that not just Dr. A. Q. Khan and his research laboratories were aware of these activities, but also high-ranking military and civilian officials. The Pakistani government is all at fault if civilian leaders take an active role. On the other hand, it suggests dangerously separated decision-making if the military took actions independently or had silent assent (Kampani, [2002](#)).

Cultural and Strategic Interest

During the Pakistan National Day reception in Seoul, Ambassador Nabeel Munir of Pakistan emphasized the 41-year-old diplomatic ties with Korea, stressing the partnership's foundation of respect, cordiality, and mutual interest. Munir emphasized the possibility of more collaboration, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, socioeconomic development, defense, and cultural exchanges. The Deputy Minister for Political Affairs of Korea, Chung Byung-won, recognized the noteworthy input of more than thirty Korean enterprises in Pakistan spanning diverse domains like energy, infrastructure, and technology. He stressed the close economic links and the contribution of development cooperation to Pakistan's sustainable progress (Kap-soo, [2024](#)). In addition to addressing international concerns like the suffering in Gaza and Kashmir, Munir urged Pakistan and Korea to keep up their efforts toward peace, prosperity, and collaboration.

This cooperation is likely to be further strengthened by President Yoon Suk Yeol's scheduled visit to Pakistan, which has been extended upon invitation. Rebuilding diplomatic relations and establishing important accords in the fields of trade and culture depend heavily on these kinds of high-level encounters. Pakistan's relationship with Korea is a smart strategic move that will improve its international relations and economic opportunities.

In the case of DPRK,

Long-term, difficult negotiations are anticipated. Demanding that North Korea complies with rigid requirements for the "complete, verifiable, and irreversible" eradication of its nuclear materials, the US

will make sure of this. On the other hand, North Korea is going to demand strong security commitments and significant financial aid in return for giving up its nuclear weapons. Careful planning and exhaustive talks will be necessary to resolve crucial issues like the precise wording of the agreement, an efficient verification procedure, and the sequence in which obligations are to be fulfilled. Pakistani nuclear activity information will support international efforts to eliminate North Korea's nuclear arsenal. In the end, though, a definitive accord will rest on North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's conviction that his nation is safer without nuclear weapons. This decision is comparable to that of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, and the whole community is still waiting to see if Kim Jong-il will take the same route (Saunders, [2004](#)).

Potential Areas for Strengthening Ties

Pakistan is facing several macroeconomic difficulties, thus assistance from countries like Saudi Arabia and Korea is essential. These alliances provide Pakistan with investment opportunities, growth paradigms, and financial relief. Pakistan is poised to fundamentally reshape its economic environment by boosting IT personnel exports and enhancing agriculture yields with contemporary technologies.

Pakistan hopes to become a technologically advanced nation supported by strong international relationships. The foundation of this optimistic outlook for prosperity is the interaction between global friendship and cooperation. Both Pakistan and South Korea saw the need to strengthen their economic links to open new doors for growth and prosperity considering the shifting global economic environment.

A major 760,000-square-foot, \$189.6 million IT park task in Karachi has been formally unveiled by Pakistan's IT Minister, Aminul Haq. With completion estimated by 2026, the park will provide advanced services to both domestic and foreign IT companies to enhance entrepreneurship and the knowledge-based economy. Over 20,000 jobs are required to be created by the project. Pakistan's Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) would offer the remaining \$28.3 million for the project, with a loan of \$158.416 million from South Korea's Exim Bank. The park, which aims to promote innovation and economic progress, was approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) in June of last year. It is a component of the Digital Pakistan vision (Ahmed, [2022](#)).

In the case of DPRK,

Pakistan gave North Korea the essential gas centrifuge designs and equipment it needed to create highly enriched uranium for its nuclear weapons program. Japan, South Korea, and the US troops stationed in Northeast Asia are all at risk from this development. Congress was told by

the CIA that North Korea's recently discovered uranium enrichment program will produce enough material for bombs in two to three years. This is on top of any weapons based on plutonium that North Korea might have created prior to the termination of its program in 1994. Pakistan turned to North Korea for support even though it was subject to American sanctions meant to offset India's stronger military. On the other hand, North Korea sought to imitate Pakistan's nuclear achievements as it was cut off from its long-time allies, China and Russia. North Korea's military and Pakistan's A.Q. Khan Nuclear Research Laboratories partnered for mutual benefit. In addition to cutting off oil supplies, the U.S. has put considerable diplomatic pressure on North Korea to renounce its uranium enrichment project. The consequences of China's narrow-minded policies can be seen in the nuclear technology exchanged for missiles between North Korea and Pakistan. China's support for Pakistan is based on its long-standing rivalry and opposition with India, whereas its support for North Korea has origins in Cold War dynamics (Malik, [2003](#)).

Conclusion

In Pakistan's popular discourse, political and socioeconomic discourse is frequently self-centered, focusing mostly on internal matters or the nation's connections with its immediate neighbors. Pakistan's impact and importance, however, go much beyond its boundaries. It is a component of a multifaceted global system and is impacted by a range of global governance frameworks, economic trends, and international events. Global crises impact Pakistan in various ways influencing not only geopolitical alliances but also economic stability. Furthermore, Pakistan's economy is greatly impacted by international economic variables such as shifts in the price of oil, modifications to trade agreements, and the possibility of a worldwide recession. And the nations like

South Korea and North Korea play a significant role in these dynamics.

Furthermore, Pakistan's financial and regulatory environment is shaped by demands made by foreign regulatory agencies including those of South Korea and North Korea. The COVID-19 pandemic brought attention to how interrelated health is on a worldwide scale, overwhelming decision-makers and arousing fears about new outbreaks, particularly for nations like Pakistan, South Korea, and North Korea which are neighbors to a state (China) where initial cases were reported. Pakistan's social fabric has historically been greatly impacted by migration, both into and out of the country, indicating Pakistan's incorporation into worldwide migratory behaviors. Pakistan is an active player on a global scale as well as a passive beneficiary of influences from around the world. It is anticipated that it will participate responsibly and aggressively in several global governance forums. It is imperative to broaden the debate beyond regional and national issues to promote a more complete understanding of Pakistan's global position.

Pakistan and South Korea have maintained a friendship and cooperative relationship that serves as an example of the effectiveness of multinational alliances in fostering mutual prosperity and understanding between different cultures. All things considered, the connections between North Korea, South Korea, and Pakistan show the complexity of international diplomacy and the range of tactics used by different countries to accomplish their economic and security goals. The secretive and problematic relations between Pakistan and North Korea stand in stark contrast to the developing collaboration between South Korea and Pakistan, emphasizing the complex interplay between international security and diplomacy forces.

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