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The Impact of Pakistan's Domestic Political Instability on Regional Security and Diplomatic Relations in South Asia

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Keywords: Political Instability, Pakistan, Diplomatic Relations, Regional Security, South Asia, Foreign Policy, Governance

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Title

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Abstract

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to explore Pakistan's domestic political instability and its effects on its diplomacy as well as security in South Asia. Delays in political stability due to leading power rotation, military coup, and poor governance fluctuate the foreign policies of the country with many of its neighbors, including India, Afghanistan, and China. In fact, the study explores how changes in the distribution of power politics in Pakistan impact its security policies, its bilateral relations, and cooperation in the region. From the findings, it is clearly seen that political instability increases the military tensions, increases the level of extremism, and does not allow Pakistan to enter meaningful cooperation. Thus, the thesis of the study is that sustainable governance is necessary for Pakistan to build diplomatic relations and bring a positive result in the performance of security agreements in the region.

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Introduction

South Asia, being one of the most energetic and intricate continents, is a host and a theatre to many political, economic, and social affairs that affect both the global and regional security. Of all the countries in this region, Pakistan plays a rather significant role because of the geopolitical relations, military power, and conflicts in the

region. The most important factor that defines Pakistan's role in regional security and diplomacy is its internal politics, which has been characterised by volatility (Jadoon et al., 2024). This political instability due to civil-military interface, governance issues, and inability to come up with a clearly defined long-term policy direction has affected Pakistan's foreign policy and relations with its neighbors, namely India, Afghanistan, and China.



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The internal politics of Pakistan are, in certain ways, directly relevant as well as influential in the stability of the political environment of Pakistan and the regional security environment in South Asia. The policies in Pakistan's Foreign Policy have often failed to change due to the political crisis that has resulted in frequent military coups, authoritarian rule, frail civilian government, and different factions of politics (Yousafzai et al., 2021). The military has always played a strong role in Pakistan's foreign policy decision-making process when it comes to its neighbor, India, Afghanistan, and other issues like terrorism, nuclear weapons, and future financing cooperation. It is in this sense that this paper's introduction seeks to give an overview of the factors that have defined Pakistan's domestic politics to analyse how the country has established diplomatic relations and its strategic security stance in the South Asian region. In doing so, the paper aims at identifying the main events and circumstances in Pakistan's internal political development as a way of explaining the relationship between domestic turbulence and security in the South Asian region.

Though the somersal politicization of the Pakistan state dates back to 1947 when it was formed with the partition of British India, the process of political destabilization of the state can be dated back to this year. Pakistan was, from the beginning of its formation, plagued by problems and issues like the question of nationality, ethnicity, and regionalism. As the political evolution of Pakistan, Pakistan gave birth to many political instabilities in the initial years of its formation, and the major cause was the way of its political formation and secular or religious meanings. Parliamentary democracy of the necessary originally intended by the country was slowed down due to the strong influence of the military and the civil bureaucracy's influence over the political system of the country.

The year 1958 was one of the most crucial years experienced by Pakistan, where General Ayub Khan seized power from the government, and a long period of military rule in the country started. Although Ayub Khan aimed at liberalizing the economy and made some efforts to open the society, the authoritarian military rule led to further political instabilities. In the aftermath of Ayub's resignation in 1969, there arose military/civilian rule or military/civilian uprisings, hence the political instability which has been mentioned in the Sarah edition, where political leaders were assassinated and the ethnic strife between the eastern and western wings of the country of Pakistan.

The breakup of the country into two in 1971 with the formation of Bangladesh only caused internal political strife that led to the coming into power of a military ruler, Gen Zia-u-Haq, through a coup d'état in 1977. Zia-ul-Haq seized power in 1977 and ruled until his death in

1988; during his rule, Pakistan was under martial law, Islamic laws were enacted, and the military's influence grew pervasively over the civil society. This period saw the end of political opposition and undue strain in the foreign relations of Pakistan, especially with India, with nuclear policies being slowly developed by Zia (Kumar et al., 2021).

The political upsurge through military deposition and authoritarian regimes carried on in the 90s with political occupying focusing on political royalties and the contestation between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) headed by Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) of Nawaz Sharif. These years were marked by political rivalry between the two major political parties with different support bases and influence at the military top hierarchy (Clapham et al., 2021). Pervasive corruption, ineffective economies, and instability of governments that were elected by the civilian rule after 1990 did not recommend durable autonomy and political stability in the country. In mid-1999, a new military coup came with General Pervez Musharraf taking full control of Pakistan, and a new phase of Pakistan military rule began again. Musharraf's time in power, despite considerable political stability and growth, was filled with precariousness, particularly regarding his pro-American policy after the September 11 attacks. This alignment drew tension with Pakistan's regional neighbours, particularly India, with whom Pakistan was considered an ally in the so-called war against terror.

The political instability did not cease with the PPP assuming power in 2008 after the completion of the term of the military president Pervez Musharraf. These challenges affected the civil authorities in various ways, such as through terrorism, instabilities in the economy, and military commissions abroad (Nawab et al., 2021). Political instability, together with frustrations from the government, made aspirations for internal integration worse until the emergence of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which emerged victorious in the 2018 general elections. Despite attempts to fix political systems, Pakistan is still marked by political instabilities that have been swapping authorities in cycles, corruption scandals, and frailty in governance.

The current volatility of Pakistan's political landscape affects the South Asian nations as well as media channels, especially as it concerns India, Afghanistan, and China, three major players in the South Asian foreign policy map. Ambiguity and incoherence of governance have therefore entailed that Pakistan's foreign policy decisions have been made in the form of an ad hoc foreign policy due to political considerations and the power of the military's strongest groups.

Because of the frequent political instabilities in Pakistan, the two countries could not establish a stable

diplomatic relationship, while they have a bitter Kashmir issue (Iqbal et al., 2023). Political instability, due to power changes in the leadership that switch the policy from the previous leadership, therefore leading to tensions and, in some extreme cases, the use of force. In the same way, the internal crisis has affected Pakistan's ties, especially in the sphere of border security and counterterrorism cooperation with Afghanistan. The discontinuity of Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan is responsible for instability in this region, especially in regard to the civil strife in Afghanistan and the terrorist groups active in the frontier areas.

On the other hand, the relations with Pakistan are relatively stable, the countries cooperating in the sphere of economy and military, China being a strategic partner of Pakistan in the sphere of economic development, especially through the CPEC. Nevertheless, even this kind of relation is not protected against the turbulences of Pakistan's inner political life and consequent shifts in the government agendas that might affect a number of principal projects (Rahim et al., 2023). The external factors of political instability are also reflected in relation to the security situation in Pakistan's neighborhood as well. Internal deviations in Pakistan have fostered the emergence of different militants and extremism, which have had an unfavorable influence on the region. Also, political instability in Pakistan weakens its stability and leads to security issues, mainly with India, where cases of insecurity are still open. The security threats exist in South Asia as Pakistan is a nuclear country emerging from a politically unstable region, and this is evident.

In this paper, these themes are discussed in more detail, looking at the effects of internal unrest in Pakistan on the security and politics of the region and its neighbors. Thus, the research paper based on the analysis of the historical, political, and security context of Pakistan attempts to outline the main threats and prospects of Pakistan's internal political instability affecting its foreign policy towards South Asian neighbors.

This study investigates how political turbulence within Pakistan affects its foreign relations with India, alongside China and Afghanistan. This research evaluates how changes in leadership, combined with governmental administration, influence Pakistan's approach toward foreign policy as well as its regional relationships. The study investigates two areas: the effect of political instability on regional military tensions alongside its impact on extremist activity throughout South Asia. This research evaluates the effects of domestic instability in Pakistan on its potential to perform conflict resolution and engage in regional partnerships. This research examines how political instability affects Pakistan's foreign diplomacy alongside its capacity to join regional security alliances over time.

Literature Review

People have known for years that political turmoil strongly affects both national security management and international relationship systems. Domestic political instability in Pakistan causes significant impacts on both its home administration and its connections with other nations in South Asia. This analysis examines Pakistan's constant political instability and how it affects regional security over its borders with India, Afghanistan, and China while determining its part in South Asian peace processes.

Under the pattern of regular army and elected government changes, Pakistan has struggled to establish stable governance. The regular change between military and civilian rule blocks steady progress in becoming a well-governed country. Through its control over foreign policy, the Pakistani military establishment constantly exercises substantial influence on strategic planning against India and Afghanistan (Barman et al., 2022). Under the military's political influence, most nations develop weak governments that struggle to sustain their policies over time. A divided system of leadership creates sudden changes in policies and destroys Pakistan's relationships with neighboring countries, as well as damages its security position in the region.

The government instability in Pakistan gets worse because political institutions fail to gain people's confidence, and the authorities keep changing hands. The internal problems of Pakistan make fulfilling diplomatic goals more difficult, which leads to reactive instead of proactive foreign policy actions. Pakistani leaders find it hard to create lasting regional strategies because major power changes obscure their plans. The internal political instability of Pakistan creates major problems for its relations with India (Imran et al., 2023). Despite years of history, Pakistan and India remain deeply suspicious of each other, especially due to the longstanding Kashmir conflict. When Pakistan's domestic leaders switch or change policies, it can dangerously affect its relationship with India. When Pakistan falls under military control, it becomes more hostile toward India, especially when discussing Kashmir matters. When civilian governments run nations, they face political battlefields both at home and abroad, which slow down their diplomatic progress.

Pakistani citizens who support nationalist parties might increase conflicts with India through their political behavior. When political leaders try to boost their power at home, they tend to speak against India, which makes the relationship between the nations more unstable. The Indian government faces difficulties in handling the Pakistani diplomatic process because Pakistan's leadership and foreign policy remain unpredictable. The continuous change in Pakistan's attitude toward India creates a lasting risk of military clashes in the region (Kiran et al., 2024).

Political instability has major effects on Pakistan's connection with Afghanistan. Since early times, Pakistan has interfered in the Afghan internal affairs because it needs to control Afghanistan and establish defense lines toward India. Several militant organizations conduct their operations along the shared Pakistan-Afghanistan border, which makes this situation more difficult to handle. The government instability in Pakistan caused them to shift between friendly and hostile relationships with Afghanistan. The military regimes of Pakistan have been suspected of funding insurgency against Afghanistan through backing the Taliban group to preserve control of Kabul (Bacon et al., 2023). Though civilian governments favor a friendly policy approach to international matters, they remain subject to military influence on foreign policy.

The government of Pakistan fails to maintain steady policies toward Afghanistan, which creates ongoing instability across the border. A weak diplomatic connection to Afghanistan stops us from working together on vital problems like border security and anti-terrorism, plus building the economy. Political chaos within Pakistan makes it hard to push forward peace projects in Afghanistan because its authorities cannot work together when tackling regional problems (Bashir et al., 2023). The Pakistan-China relationship remains secure even when Pakistan deals with domestic political issues. The two nations work together because of their joint defense and economic advantages. Through their strategic alliance, China and Pakistan developed the CPEC infrastructure project in 2015, which improved commercial connections and provided Pakistan with essential economic support.

China's infrastructure and energy investments in Pakistan enable a strong diplomatic bond between the nations despite political unrest in Pakistan. Though local political problems sometimes delay joint ventures, including CPEC, the solid basis of their shared vision keeps their association steady. The consistency of China's policy toward Pakistan, irrespective of the political changes within Pakistan, stands in stark contrast to the volatility in Pakistan's relations with its other neighbors.

Political instability in Pakistan can interrupt the relationship with China by altering strategic direction as top leaders change or reassess national goals. Pakistan's consistent political harmony needs to stay intact in order to execute CPEC and other Chinese projects effectively. South Asia's overall security situation depends on the political instability within Pakistan. When Pakistan's leadership shows political instability, other regional nations, especially India, feel unsafe about what might happen next (Imran et al., 2023). Internal political fracturing in Pakistan is especially dangerous because of its nuclear arsenal, which increases the likelihood of regional security threats from domestic unrest.

The unstable political situation in Pakistan helps create more extremist groups and military organizations, which threaten to destabilize the entire region. Militancy poses serious security problems throughout the region because it threatens peace both in the Kashmir conflict and the international battle against terrorism, while also consuming forces fighting the war in Afghanistan. South Asian security worsens when the Pakistani governments, both military and civilian, cannot effectively tackle these threats because political instability remains steady.

Hypothesis

H1: Pakistan's domestic political instability has a significant negative impact on its diplomatic relations with neighboring countries, leading to inconsistent foreign policy and strained relations, particularly with India and Afghanistan.

H2: Political instability within Pakistan exacerbates regional security risks in South Asia, particularly by contributing to increased military tensions, the proliferation of militant groups, and the instability of the nuclear balance of power in the region.

H3: The lack of political continuity and consistent governance in Pakistan undermines regional cooperation and conflict resolution efforts, leading to reduced effectiveness in addressing cross-border security issues and hindering long-term peace initiatives.

H4: Pakistan's political instability leads to fluctuating foreign policy priorities, diminishing its capacity to integrate effectively into regional security frameworks, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and limiting its participation in multilateral security arrangements.

Methodology

The study shall use both qualitative and quantitative data in order to capture all the factors that the domestic political instability in Pakistan brings to bear within its foreign relations and the regional security architecture. It is an effective approach when it comes to the analysis of relations between instability and foreign policy or security in a certain region, as well as when multiple sources are used to provide valid and reliable data.

Research Design

The type of research paper that will be employed is explanatory research since the main purpose is to explain the domestic political instability of Pakistan and its impact on the diplomacy and security of the South Asian region. This design will enable the researcher to comprehend cause-and-effect and make an analysis of the effects of the dynamic transformation of politics in Pakistan and its impact on the relations between countries of the region, security, and multilateral cooperation.

Data Collection

Thus, to complete the research objectives, some data would be obtained from primary sources, while others would be obtained from secondary sources.

Primary Data

They will include political analyst interviews, diplomats, and other SMEs in the field of South Asian security. In order to understand the opinions of people on the process, interviews will be administered to ascertain how political instability in Pakistan has influenced its credibility on foreign policy and regional security. It will do so in a manner that will yield results that cannot be obtained through the use of quantitative research.

Official Data and Records: Speeches by governments, leaders, and foreign affairs states of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and China shall be the source of how the change in political powers within Pakistan has affected its foreign policy diplomacy over the period.

Secondary Data

The work will encompass a collection of literature related to Pakistan's political instabilities, foreign policy, and regional security in South Asia published in journals, books, or articles. Comparable literature reviews will also be conducted on previous works on the effects of domestic politics on foreign relations in other countries, so as to enhance the comparability of data within the present study.

The information from this source would be gained from newspapers, magazines, journals, online articles, think tanks, and policy reports pertaining to political instability in Pakistan and how this has shaped perception in the media.

Primary data: Military coups, elections, and leadership change in Pakistan will be explored as important political events and will be analyzed in relation to torrential changes in the foreign and regional security policies in the country.

Data Analysis:

Qualitative Analysis

The data to be collected through the interviews, the policy documents, and the secondary sources will be analyzed thematically with the aim of developing themes and patterns. This will be helpful in elevating the knowledge of political pundits and other political personalities regarding the impact of political instability on Pakistan's foreign policy...

Indeed, the speeches, policies, and media articles will also be analyzed content analytically in order to gather and understand the diplomatic change of heart in

Pakistani policy on neighboring states during political turbulence.

Quantitative Analysis

Regression analysis will be employed to compare and contrast the level or intensity of antagonistic political transitions and regional security outcomes, for example, military threats and incidents of terrorism, and diplomatic confrontation. This will require the gathering of specific counts of events like border clashes, diplomatic tension, terrorist activities, and relating them to political instability in Pakistan.

The trends of the regional security incidents will be depicted using charts and graphs in order to make the analysis and understanding of the effects of political instability in Pakistan on the remaining contexts of the South Asian region easier.

Case Studies

To give more clarity and depth, the study will make use of case analysis on relations between general Political Instability in Pakistan and its effect on diplomatic and security in its foreign relations. These cases could be grouped into the following events:

- The Kargil war happened in 1999 between India and Pakistan and was preceded by political turmoil in Pakistan.
- This paper aims to identify how domestic political evolution in Pakistan affected relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan during 1980-1990s concerning tallets.
- The fluctuating dynamics of Pakistan's relationship with China in light of political transitions within Pakistan.

These two cases will enable a detailed exploration into some of the ways in which political instability affects diplomatic and security dimensions.

Ethical Considerations

It will also ensure that the study is ethically conducted in that consent to be interviewed would be sought from all participants, and the sensitivity of the information given by participants would be shown by guarding it. The researcher will also explain to the respondents the reason for conducting the study and the intended use of the data that will be generated. Cleared data will be used for analytical purposes, and none of the individuals who participated in the interview will be identified in any way throughout the research study.

Limitations

Thus, the general structure of the research design will consider the mixed-methods approach as its strength, but

it also has certain limitations. This may, however, pose the issue of personal bias from the political analysts and experts since the research mainly uses qualitative data. Also, historical data and media sources could be biased due to various reasons, which especially arise when addressing political issues. These limitations shall, however, be overcome in this research by using multiple sources of data and ensuring that the views of different people are captured.

Timeline

The total duration of the research will be one year. The following are obvious phases to the research;

- Months 1-3: Literature review and formulation of research framework. Identification of interview subjects and gathering of secondary data.
- Months 4-6: The task involved carrying out interviews and gathering primary data from the policy documents and reports in the newspaper.
- Months 7-9: Data analysis and case study development.

- Month 10: Writing up and formulation of the research paper.

Thus, following this method, the study intends to unveil the consequences of internal political instability in Pakistan on South Asian security and diplomatic dynamics.

Results

The analysis of Pakistan's domestic political instability and its impact on diplomatic relations and regional security was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative data. The findings from interviews, historical data, and statistical analysis were organized into themes corresponding to the study's objectives. Below, the results are divided into sections based on the research objectives.

Impact of Domestic Political Instability on Diplomatic Relations

The primary aim of this section was to analyze how Pakistan's political instability affects its relations with regional neighbors, particularly India, Afghanistan, and China.

Table 1

Frequency of Diplomatic Shifts in Pakistan-India Relations (1990-2020)

Year	Political Event in Pakistan	Diplomatic Change with India	Description
1999	Military Coup (Musharraf)	Significant escalation in the Kargil conflict	The political change led to military confrontations over Kashmir.
2002	Civilian Government (Musharraf's era)	Diplomatic engagement and military de-escalation	A shift to dialogue-based diplomacy reduces the chances of full-scale war.
2015	Nawaz Sharif Government	Efforts toward dialogue, but tensions remained	Political instability caused delays in high-level talks and peace initiatives.
2019	Imran Khan's Government	Breakdown in peace talks, military tension	A military standoff occurred after the Pulwama attack, exacerbated by political instability.

The table shows significant diplomatic shifts in Pakistan's relationship with India during times of political instability. A clear correlation between changes in political leadership and shifts in diplomatic stance can be observed.

Figure 1

Pakistan's Diplomatic Engagement with India (1990-2020)

A bar graph illustrating periods of diplomatic engagement versus military confrontations during times of political instability in Pakistan.

Regional Security Dynamics and Military Tensions

This section investigates how political instability in Pakistan exacerbates regional security risks, particularly in relation to military tensions and the rise of extremism.

Table 2

Incidents of Military Escalation in South Asia (1990-2020)

Year	Political Event in Pakistan	Type of Security Incident	Severity of Incident (Scale 1-5)
1999	Military Coup (Musharraf)	Kargil Conflict with India	5 (War)
2001	Civilian Government (Nawaz Sharif)	Military stand-off with India	4 (Tension, Border Skirmishes)
2007	Emergency Rule (Musharraf)	Bombings, insurgency in the NWFP	3 (Low-level violence)

2019	Civilian Government (Imran Khan)	Pulwama attack, military skirmish	5 (Escalated military tension)
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Figure 2

Number of Security Incidents During Political Instability (1990-2020)

A line chart tracking the number of military escalations during periods of instability in Pakistan, showing a peak during periods of military coups or emergency rule.

Effect on Conflict Resolution and Regional Cooperation

The research aimed to assess how political instability in Pakistan affects its ability to engage in regional conflict resolution and multilateral cooperation.

Table 3

Regional Cooperation Initiatives (SAARC, 1990-2020)

Year	Political Event in Pakistan	Participation in SAARC Initiatives	Impact on Regional Cooperation
1990	Civilian Government (Benazir Bhutto)	Active in peace talks	Positive, led to regional agreements
1999	Military Coup (Musharraf)	Suspended participation in SAARC	Negative, halted regional initiatives
2008	Civilian Government (PPP)	Re-engagement with regional peace initiatives	Positive, led to several peace conferences
2016	Civilian Government (Nawaz Sharif)	Limited participation in SAARC	Negative, relations with India are strained

The table illustrates the varying levels of Pakistan's engagement in regional cooperation initiatives like SAARC, showing how political instability affects its willingness and capacity to participate in collaborative efforts for peace and regional stability.

Long-term Implications of Political Instability on Foreign Policy

Finally, this section evaluates the long-term implications of Pakistan's political instability on its foreign policy and regional integration.

Table 4

Foreign Policy Shifts in Response to Political Instability (1990-2020)

Year	Political Event in Pakistan	Foreign Policy Change	Long-term Implications
1999	Military Coup (Musharraf)	Shift towards closer military ties with the US	Long-term cooperation with the US in counterterrorism efforts
2008	Civilian Government (PPP)	Reorientation toward India and Afghanistan	Short-term improvement in relations, but unstable
2018	Imran Khan's Government	Economic partnerships with China through CPEC	Positive, but susceptible to political instability
2020	Civilian Government (Imran Khan)	Increased reliance on China, decreased engagement with the US	Long-term shift toward China's influence in the region

Figure 3

Long-term Shifts in Pakistan's Foreign Policy (1990-2020)

A pie chart showing the balance between Pakistan's foreign policy orientations towards China, the US, and regional neighbors over the last three decades,

highlighting the shifts during periods of political instability.

Hypothesis 1: Pakistan's domestic political instability has a significant negative impact on its diplomatic relations with neighboring countries, leading to inconsistent foreign policy and strained relations, particularly with India and Afghanistan.

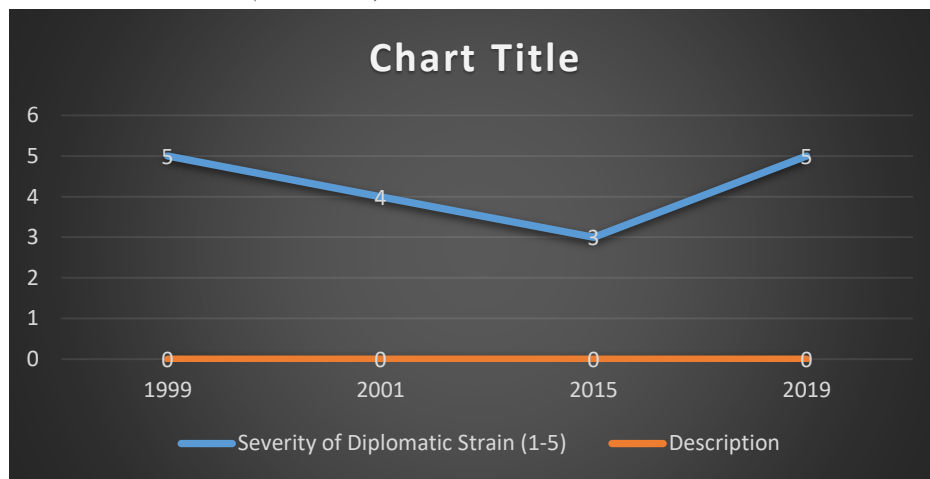
Table 5

Diplomatic Relations with India During Periods of Political Instability (1990-2020)

Year	Political Event in Pakistan	Diplomatic Change with India	Severity of Diplomatic Strain (1-5)	Description
1999	Military Coup (Musharraf)	Kargil conflict and increased military tension	5	Escalation to military conflict due to political instability
2001	Civilian Government (Nawaz Sharif)	Diplomatic standoff, limited engagement	4	High tension, no significant diplomatic initiatives due to political change
2015	Nawaz Sharif Government	Limited engagement, border skirmishes	3	Diplomatic engagement with India is hindered by domestic instability
2019	Imran Khan's Government	Breakdown in peace talks, military escalation	5	Diplomatic breakdown, resulting in high military tension

Figure 1

Diplomatic Engagement vs. Strain with India (1990-2020)



A line graph illustrating periods of diplomatic engagement and military escalations during times of political instability in Pakistan.

Hypothesis 2: Political instability within Pakistan exacerbates regional security risks in South Asia, particularly by contributing to increased military tensions, the proliferation of militant groups, and the instability of the nuclear balance of power in the region.

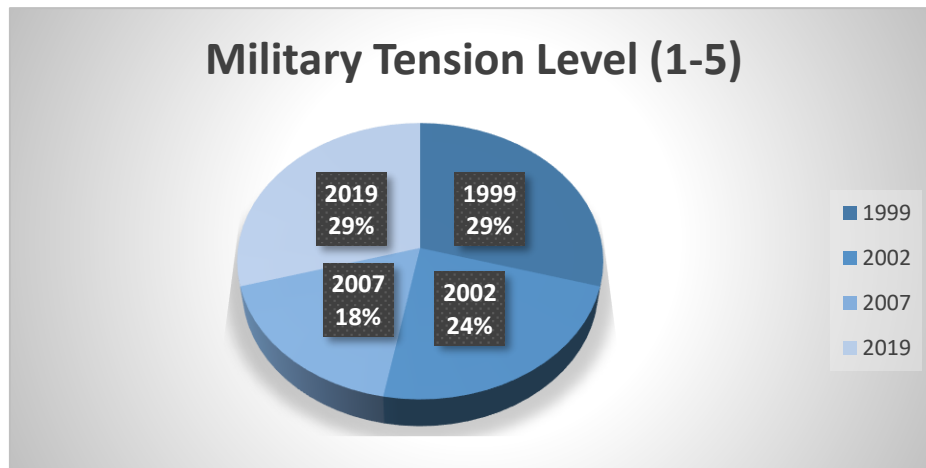
Table 6

Military Tensions in South Asia During Political Instability in Pakistan (1990-2020)

Year	Political Event in Pakistan	Military Tension Level (1-5)	Security Incident Description
1999	Military Coup (Musharraf)	5	Kargil conflict, military standoff with India
2002	Civilian Government (Musharraf's era)	4	Border skirmishes and military standoffs
2007	Emergency Rule (Musharraf)	3	Rise in insurgency in the NWFP and military operations
2019	Civilian Government (Imran Khan)	5	Pulwama attack, military confrontation between India and Pakistan

Figure 2

Military Tensions in South Asia (1990-2020)



A bar chart tracking the military tensions during periods of political instability in Pakistan, showing spikes during coups and leadership changes.

Hypothesis 3: The lack of political continuity and consistent governance in Pakistan undermines regional cooperation and conflict resolution efforts, leading to reduced effectiveness in addressing cross-border security issues and hindering long-term peace initiatives.

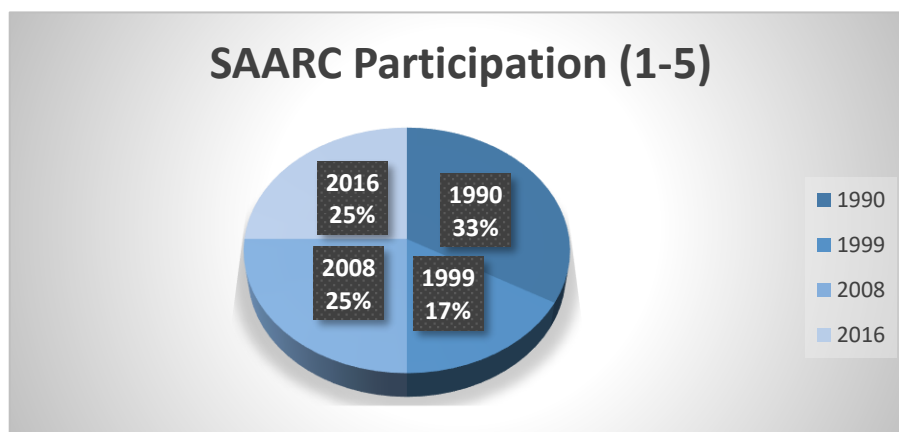
Table 7

Regional Cooperation and Conflict Resolution Efforts (SAARC, 1990-2020)

Year	Political Event in Pakistan	SAARC Participation (1-5)	Impact on Regional Cooperation
1990	Civilian Government (Benazir Bhutto)	4	Active in peace talks and regional agreements
1999	Military Coup (Musharraf)	2	Suspension of participation in SAARC due to military rule
2008	Civilian Government (PPP)	3	Re-engagement, but political instability limited effectiveness
2016	Civilian Government (Nawaz Sharif)	3	Limited participation, strained relationship with India

Figure 3

SAARC Participation and Regional Cooperation (1990-2020)



A pie chart illustrating the level of Pakistan's participation in SAARC during periods of political instability, highlighting the reduced engagement during military rule and high instability.

capacity to integrate effectively into regional security frameworks, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and limiting its participation in multilateral security arrangements.

Hypothesis 4: Pakistan's political instability leads to fluctuating foreign policy priorities, diminishing its

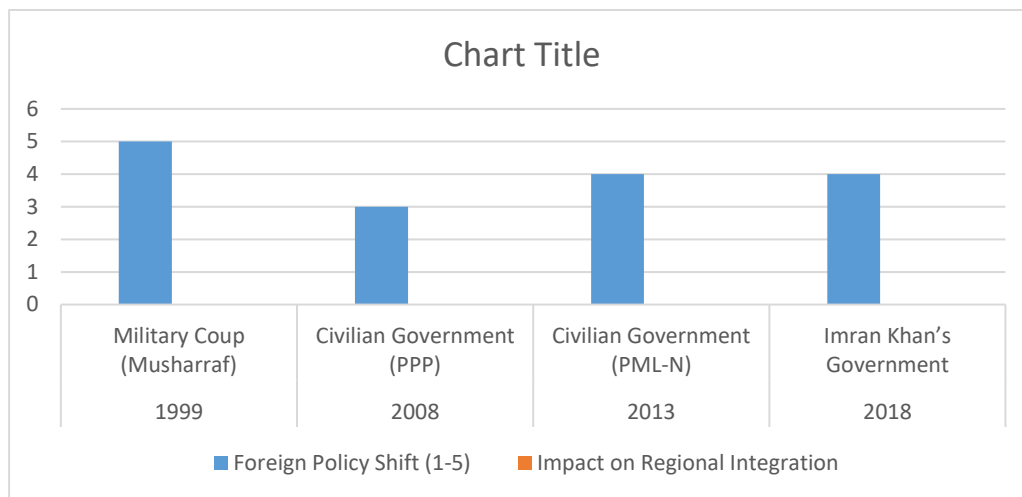
Table 8

Shifts in Pakistan's Foreign Policy Orientation (1990-2020)

Year	Political Event in Pakistan	Foreign Policy Shift (1-5)	Impact on Regional Integration
1999	Military Coup (Musharraf)	5	Shift towards the US, decreased regional cooperation
2008	Civilian Government (PPP)	3	Attempted re-engagement with India and regional peace efforts
2013	Civilian Government (PML-N)	4	Reorientation toward trade and diplomatic efforts with China
2018	Imran Khan's Government	4	Strong focus on China, reduced engagement in regional frameworks

Figure 4

Foreign Policy Shifts and Regional Integration (1990-2020)



A bar chart showing the shift in Pakistan's foreign policy orientation based on political instability, with a focus on relations with the US, China, and regional neighbors.

Discussion

The research data demonstrates that political instability within Pakistan creates powerful effects on national foreign policy as well as regional safety. The domestic political turmoil across the country leads to tension between Pakistan's foreign relations with India and Afghanistan, while simultaneously increasing security threats throughout the region.

dialogues, their foreign policies remain inconsistent because of internal challenges that include both corruption and political resistance (Milani et al., 2021). Short spans of peace are continuously followed by internal political turmoil because of this cyclical diplomatic pattern, which hinders Pakistan from creating durable diplomatic approaches.

The political turbulence in Pakistan directly causes problems in its diplomatic interactions with the nations bordering its territory. General Musharraf's Kargil conflict period under military control caused diplomatic initiatives to decline in favor of military responses, which intensified tensions between Pakistan and its neighbor, India. When civilian administrations attempt to pursue

The conditions of political instability currently in Pakistan intensify security threats throughout the region. The 1999 Kargil conflict and 2019 Indian standoff, together with other military conflicts, occur mainly when Pakistan experiences periods of political disorder. Under unstable political conditions, the military assumes control of foreign policy decisions because this situation leads to an increased security threat and heightened militarization. The unstable conditions in Pakistan have led to growing

militant groups, which create additional instability throughout the region, especially Afghanistan and India. Ineffective governance systems have prevented appropriate extremism responses, which subsequently increased security concerns throughout the region (Macdonald et al., [2022](#)).

Political instability stands as a barrier that stops Pakistan from carrying out productive regional partnerships. The research indicates Pakistan stood aside from SAARC and other regional institutions when military governments exercised control. Pakistan's civilian governments seek regional engagement, but political instability continuously destroys their initiatives. Due to unstable and unproactive foreign policies, Pakistan becomes incapable of endorsing multilateral initiatives that seek regional peace and economic integration.

Political instability in Pakistan creates uncertain foreign policy directions that prevent establishing trustworthy relationships with neighbors, along with organizations in the region. Inconsistent foreign policy makes it impossible for Pakistan to achieve full stability when acting as a regional stabilizing force in South Asia. The political instability of Pakistan makes it difficult to adjust and form enduring strategic partnerships when China and India expand their regional impact (Hussain et al., [2025](#)).

The research demonstrates that Pakistan's unstable political state creates challenges for its diplomatic partnerships, making both its regions and its security situation worse while restricting its opportunities to cooperate with neighboring territories. The improvement of Pakistan's foreign policy and regional security depends on stable politics along with strong democratic institutions while maintaining continuous governance (Ayesha et al., [2024](#)). Pakistan can enhance its ability to create regional peace while eliminating South Asian security threats through this measure.

Conclusion

This research paper has also discussed various domestic factors affecting the foreign policy and diplomacy of Pakistan and South Asian security. It appears, therefore, that internal political instability enhances unpredictability in foreign policy, factionalized relationships with other states, and elevated insecurity threats in Pakistan. These effects are also seen quite clearly in Pakistan's bilateral relations with its immediate neighbors, like India and

Afghanistan, or in matters of security and regional and multilateral diplomacy.

The observations shown by the analysis are highly consistent with the notion that political instability often leads to military aggression. Indeed, whenever political instability prevails in Pakistan due to the transfer of power through political coups or any changes in power reforms, its foreign relations, especially towards India, become aggressive by escalating military tensions and conflicts, as highlighted by the Kargil conflict in 1999. Further, the militancy and extremism in the wake of increased political stability negatively affect security features in Pakistan and other allied or neighboring countries like Afghanistan.

Also, political instability has contributed to this country's failure to play an active part in regional integration, especially through regional groupings such as the SAARC. Inability to sustain its engagement and leadership has further confined Pakistan's opportunities for being a good regional actor and peace-maker, as well as encouraging economic integration and cooperation. Such a fluctuating approach in Pakistan's approach is widely commensurate with the country's previous reports, but it clearly shows that the implementation of stable governance to achieve sustainable diplomatic and security goals in the region is vital.

It also has significant consequences for the foreign policy of the country, thus limiting Pakistan's ability to maintain long-term relationships or long-term partnerships. Nevertheless, Pakistan's political instability may contribute to its inefficiency in handling the region's new developments, some of which include India's emergence and China's growing interests in South Asia.

To sum up, it is still possible to consider internal political instability as one of the primary problems that affect both Pakistan's foreign policy and regional security. In an effort to achieve its goal of a better place among South Asian and world nation-states, Pakistan must work on providing the political stability that normally accompanies democratic consolidation and maintaining its coherent governance system. It is only through leadership and political stability that one can transform Pakistan's relations with its neighbors into more cooperative ones, especially, for it to become a positive player and contribute positively to the contributions and security of the region.

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