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AN ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PAKISTAN'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY (1947–2001)

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ABSTRACT

This study analysis the evolution of public diplomacy in Pakistan's foreign policy from independence in 1947 to the contemporary period. Furthermore, situating it within broader theoretical debates on soft power and constructivism in international relations, this study traces how public diplomacy in Pakistan has remained largely reactive, fragmented, and institutionally underdeveloped across different political regimes and international contexts. Traditionally, Pakistan's foreign policy has been dominated by security imperatives, regional rivalries, and alliance politics, which marginalized non-traditional diplomatic instruments such as public diplomacy, cultural outreach, and people-to-people engagement. The particular attention is given to the transformative impact of globalization, the post-9/11 security environment, and the digital revolution, which intensified international scrutiny and exposed Pakistan's vulnerability to negative global narratives. The current study follows qualitative, interpretive, and historically grounded analysis based on secondary sources, However, drawing on Soft Power Theory, the study assesses Pakistan's capacity to project attraction, credibility, and legitimacy, while a constructivist lens is employed to analyze how identity, discourse, and international perceptions shape and constrain public diplomacy practices. The findings revealed that despite possessing significant soft power resources—such as cultural heritage, diaspora networks, humanitarian contributions, and participation in international peacekeeping. Pakistan has struggled to institutionalize public diplomacy due to civil–military imbalances, bureaucratic fragmentation, political instability, and overreliance on security-centric narratives. The study argues that the absence of a coherent, civilian-led, and long-term public diplomacy strategy has limited Pakistan's ability to cultivate sustained relationships with foreign publics and to project a multidimensional national image. This research contributes to the limited scholarship on public diplomacy in developing security-conscious states and offers policy-relevant insights for strengthening Pakistan's foreign policy through strategic, credible, and inclusive public diplomacy.

Keywords: *Public Diplomacy; Pakistan's Foreign Policy; Soft Power; Constructivism; Globalization; Strategic Communication; National Image; Foreign Policy Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

The modern framework of international relations has seen a fundamental shift in the role of diplomacy as it has grown well beyond the previous state-to-state negotiations held behind closed diplomatic lines. Globalization, the emergence of technology, and the revolution of information have influenced the way in which states relate to the international system, with diplomacy now centered more on interaction with foreign publics, the international press, civil societies, diasporas, and individuals in cyberspace. This shift has resulted in the emergence of public diplomacy as a key tool of foreign policy, whereby

states seek to shape global perceptions, develop understanding, and project a more positive national image, with people-to-people contact, dialogue, persuasion, and credibility becoming more important instruments of international influence than traditional, government-to-government diplomacy (Cull, 2008; Melissen, 2011). This role has gained added significance in an era where global opinion can influence foreign policy outcomes, economic relations, and international legitimacy, as the proliferation of global media networks and social media has enabled non-state actors and individuals to actively engage in global discourse, reducing government control over narrative construction; as Jan Melissen (2011) argues, contemporary diplomacy should therefore be relational rather than transactional, emphasizing long-term relationship-building over short-term political messaging, with public diplomacy functioning not merely as a communication tool but as a strategic process incorporating culture, values, policy, and dialogue to maximize a state's soft power and international image (Nye, 2004).

In the case of Pakistan, public diplomacy has emerged as a significant but historically neglected element of foreign policy, as the country's external relations since independence in 1947 have been dominated almost entirely by existential security concerns, regional politics — particularly with India — and alliance politics, producing a foreign policy orientation emphasizing military power, strategic alliances, and crisis management, while leaving little institutional space for organized diplomatic outreach; as a result, Pakistan's engagement with foreign publics has been largely reactive and inconsistent, surfacing mainly during crises rather than through sustained, proactive image-building and cultural outreach (Haqqani, 2013), a security-oriented trend that has limited the country's capacity to project a multidimensional national image abroad. These dynamics were further complicated by a changing global environment, in which the digital revolution and globalization heightened international scrutiny of state behavior and elevated reputation management as a central concern in diplomacy — an issue that became especially acute for Pakistan after the events of September 11, 2001, which led much of the world to associate the country with terrorism, extremism, and instability, exposing the limitations of conventional diplomacy and underscoring the need for proactive public diplomacy capable of conveying Pakistan's perspectives, sacrifices, and policy constraints to the international community (Nye, 2011; Gilboa, 2008), making the post-9/11 period a genuine turning point in recognizing the strategic importance of public diplomacy for Pakistan.

Over the past two decades, Pakistan has undertaken several initiatives to improve its international image and counter negative perceptions, including cultural diplomacy, media engagement, humanitarian assistance, participation in global peacekeeping operations, and growing involvement in digital diplomacy, with institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), cultural organizations, and overseas Pakistani communities each contributing in different ways to the development of these practices, while digital media in particular has allowed Pakistani authorities and diplomatic missions to connect with the international community without relying on traditional media intermediaries (Manor, 2019); nevertheless, Pakistan's public diplomacy efforts remain uneven and poorly institutionalized, hampered chiefly by the absence of a long-term strategic approach and effective coordination among the multiple state actors involved in international communication, as well as by political instability, frequent changes in government, and an unsettled civil-military balance in foreign policy-making — conditions that, as Cull (2014) and Melissen (2011) note, run counter to the principle that the most effective public diplomacy emerges when civilian institutions take the lead in narrative-building through cultural, educational, and societal engagement rather than relying primarily on security-driven messaging, a tendency that in Pakistan's case has often overshadowed more nuanced dimensions of national identity. Building on this context, the present research examines the

historical development, institutional dynamics, and contemporary challenges of public diplomacy in Pakistan's foreign policy, situating the Pakistani experience within broader theoretical debates on soft power and constructivism — Soft Power Theory emphasizing the role of attraction, credibility, and legitimacy in shaping international outcomes, and constructivist approaches highlighting the centrality of identity, narrative, and perception to foreign policy behavior (Nye, 2004; Wendt, 1999) — with the aim of contributing both to academic scholarship and policy discourse by illuminating the opportunities and constraints shaping public diplomacy in a developing, security-sensitive state such as Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to critically analyze current academic sources pertaining to public diplomacy, soft power, and foreign policy, with particular emphasis on Pakistan, situating the present research within existing scholarly discussions, identifying prevalent theoretical approaches, and outlining gaps where further inquiry is needed; the review demonstrates that while public diplomacy has been extensively examined in Western scholarship, the Pakistani case remains comparatively underexplored, scattered, and overshadowed by security-centric approaches. The concept itself emerged in the mid-twentieth century amid Cold War geopolitics, with Edmund Gullion's articulation of the term in the 1960s establishing that governments needed to communicate directly with foreign populations to shape perceptions and attitudes (Cull, 2008; Cull, 2006), an effort initially driven by ideological competition between the United States and the Soviet Union and operationalized through cultural exchange programs, international broadcasting, and scholarships designed to spread national values and counter rival ideologies (Parker, 2020; Tuch, 1990; Leonard, 2002). This early model, exemplified by institutions such as the United States Information Agency, was largely one-way and state-centric, often criticized as propaganda that undermined credibility due to its limited attention to feedback or genuine dialogue (Cull, 2012; Gregory, 2011; Cull, 2009; Leonard, 2002), though it nonetheless laid the groundwork for systematic cultural, academic, and media exchange networks. The post-Cold War era brought significant change as globalization diversified the actors shaping international perceptions, with NGOs, civil society, and international media networks displacing the state-centric model and prompting scholars to emphasize dialogue, relationship-building, and multi-stakeholder engagement (Melissen, 2005; Cull, 2009; Nye, 2008), a shift further accelerated in the twenty-first century by digital communication technologies that enabled real-time, interactive engagement between states, non-state actors, and global audiences, giving rise to digital diplomacy and a relational model grounded in credibility, transparency, and long-term trust-building rather than one-way message projection (Manor, 2019; Semetko et al., 2011; Cull, 2009; Nye, 2008; Melissen, 2005).

Joseph Nye's (2004) theory of soft power offers a guiding framework for understanding this relationship, positing that influence achieved through attraction and persuasion — rooted in culture, political values, and foreign policy legitimacy — differs fundamentally from the coercive or material instruments of hard power, with public diplomacy serving as the principal vehicle for projecting these sources of soft power abroad (Nye, 2011; Melissen, 2011). Effective public diplomacy builds soft power through trust, credibility, and mutual understanding via tools such as cultural diplomacy, educational exchange, media engagement, and humanitarianism, though the impact of these efforts depends heavily on the consistency between a state's domestic and international conduct, since contradictions — such as rights abuses, corruption, or erratic policy — can undermine soft power projection altogether (Snow, 2009; Leonard, 2002; Nye, 2011); digital media has since deepened this dynamic by enabling real-time, two-way engagement that emphasizes responsiveness and transparency over traditional propaganda models (Manor, 2019; Melissen, 2011). Developing states often face constraints in capitalizing on these resources due to limited financial and institutional capacity,

political instability, and internal conflict, yet researchers note that cultural heritage, historical narratives, artistic achievement, and diaspora networks can serve as powerful, low-cost soft power assets when tactically deployed (Melissen, 2011; Leonard, 2002; Nye, 2011) — a dynamic clearly visible in Pakistan, which possesses substantial cultural, religious, and diasporic capital but has struggled to convert these assets into durable international influence due to governance, political, and security challenges (Riaz, 2016; Haqqani, 2013). This connects directly to foreign policy more broadly, where public diplomacy is increasingly recognized as integral rather than peripheral: by engaging foreign publics directly, states can shape perceptions in ways that create more favorable conditions for their policies, complementing traditional government-to-government diplomacy with a longer-term, relationship-driven strategy (Gilboa, 2008; Melissen, 2011). Public diplomacy plays a particularly critical role during crises, allowing states to frame issues, manage perceptions, and build international goodwill before narratives become entrenched (Gilboa, 2008; Cull, 2009), while also supporting broader reputation management that affects a country's ability to attract investment, tourism, and political support (Anholt, 2007; Nye, 2011; Snow, 2009) — though such efforts are frequently undermined by bureaucratic fragmentation, inter-agency rivalry, and civil-military imbalances, particularly in states where security institutions dominate external relations at the expense of diplomatic and cultural engagement (Cull, 2014; Melissen, 2011), a tension clearly evident in Pakistan, where rich soft power resources remain underutilized due to bureaucratic inefficiency, security-driven policy priorities, and political instability, underscoring the need to reconcile governance, messaging, and institutional coordination if public diplomacy is to become a proactive rather than merely reactive tool of national interest (Riaz, 2016; Gilboa, 2008; Cull, 2014).

Scholarship specifically addressing Pakistan's public diplomacy remains limited and fragmented, shaped largely by a broader tendency to examine the country's foreign policy through the lens of security and geopolitics, with public diplomacy treated as a secondary theme subordinate to military influence, conflict, and strategic alliances (Butt, 2024; Abbasi, 2023); although interest in cultural diplomacy, media coverage, and diaspora engagement has grown, few studies offer an in-depth examination of the historical development and institutional processes underpinning Pakistan's public diplomacy (Khan, 2025; Rehman, 2025). Media framing has emerged as one notable area of inquiry, with Abbasi (2023) analyzing coverage of Pakistani state visits to China and the United States to show how domestic media discourse shapes international impressions — finding consistently positive coverage of China that reinforces bilateral ties, contrasted with persistent suspicion toward the United States — though this work stops short of examining the broader institutional or policy frameworks that might coordinate such efforts. Civil-military dynamics represent another key strand, with Butt (2024) demonstrating that security institutions dominate Pakistan's external relations, frequently overriding civilian efforts to shape narratives and project soft power, a civil-military imbalance that researchers argue must be addressed to ensure public diplomacy activities remain coherent and aligned with broader foreign policy goals (Cull, 2014; Melissen, 2011). Cultural diplomacy remains similarly underexplored: Khan (2025) compares Pakistan's approach unfavorably with that of Saudi Arabia, attributing Pakistan's underuse of its rich cultural heritage to political instability and weak institutional support, while Rehman (2025) argues that media and digital tools could meaningfully enhance Pakistan's soft power if pursued through a more organized communication strategy — together pointing to substantial, if largely untapped, potential. Taken as a whole, this literature reveals both a gap and an opportunity: existing studies offer valuable but scattered insights into media framing, civil-military relations, and cultural diplomacy, yet lack the longitudinal, integrative analysis needed to understand how Pakistan might systematically harness its diaspora networks, cultural heritage, and digital platforms to build a coherent public diplomacy framework (Abbasi, 2023; Butt, 2024;

Khan, 2025; Rehman, 2025) — an understanding essential to positioning public diplomacy as a central, rather than peripheral, instrument of Pakistani foreign policy.

Theoretical engagement with public diplomacy has been dominated by Joseph Nye's soft power framework, which explains how states win influence through culture, political values, and policy legitimacy rather than coercion, with public diplomacy serving as the principal mechanism for operationalizing this form of power and earning the trust of global audiences (Nye, 2004; Nye, 2011; Melissen, 2011; Snow, 2009). Constructivist approaches offer a complementary lens, emphasizing how ideas, norms, identities, and discourse shape international behavior, framing public diplomacy not merely as a tool for protecting existing power but as a process through which meanings and social realities are actively constructed across borders — with effectiveness varying according to historical, social, and cultural context (Wendt, 1999; Melissen, 2011). Despite the prominence of these frameworks, however, empirical engagement with them remains limited in developing states generally, and in Pakistan specifically, where existing literature tends to be descriptive, policy-oriented, or case-specific — centered on media framing, cultural exchange, or security-related diplomacy — without explicitly applying soft power, constructivist, or other international relations theories (Abbasi, 2023; Butt, 2024; Khan, 2025), a gap that limits both the analytical rigor of individual studies and their generalizability across cases. This theoretical gap is particularly significant in Pakistan's case, given that its public diplomacy actors span state, non-state, and diaspora networks; integrating soft power and constructivist perspectives could provide a more robust analytical foundation for understanding the interplay between Pakistan's cultural heritage, diaspora networks, and media strategies, while also enabling more critical assessment of the consistency between domestic policy and international messaging — a factor central to credibility and the long-term success of public diplomacy (Nye, 2011; Melissen, 2011). A more theoretically grounded approach would thus strengthen the explanatory power of future research, facilitate comparative analysis with other states, and help inform the development of more coherent and strategic public diplomacy initiatives within the Pakistani context (Gilboa, 2008; Cull, 2014).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To trace the historical evolution of public diplomacy in Pakistan's foreign policy
- To analyze the institutional role of state and non-state actors in public diplomacy
- To assess the effectiveness of Pakistan's public diplomacy initiatives
- To identify challenges and limitations in the current framework
- To propose policy-oriented recommendations for improving public diplomacy practices

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How has public diplomacy evolved in Pakistan's foreign policy since 1947?
2. What institutional actors and policy mechanisms have shaped Pakistan's public diplomacy initiatives?
3. How effective has public diplomacy been in shaping international perceptions of Pakistan?
4. What political and structural challenges have constrained the development of public diplomacy in Pakistan?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research assumes a qualitative research design, which best suits the study of complex social, political, and diplomatic phenomena that require an understanding of perceptions, narratives, identity construction, and policy development (Creswell, 2014), since the concept of public diplomacy cannot be readily evaluated using only quantitative measures, as it entails such subjective aspects as national image, credibility, trust, and the projection of soft power; the study is also longitudinal in nature, as the author examines Pakistan's public diplomacy across the various eras

since 1947 to date in order to establish trends and continuity, while remaining descriptive and explanatory — descriptive in systematically outlining how the evolution, structures, and practices of public diplomacy in Pakistan have developed, and explanatory in identifying the underlying causes, relationships, and factors driving these changes, articulating the nature of this development since independence and the institutions and issues that have shaped it. This qualitative design is further supported by an interpretive approach that allows for the in-depth study of meanings, interpretations, and policy discourses embedded in official documents, academic literature, and diplomatic practices, examining the narratives and identity constructions present in official discourse and scholarly interpretation — an approach especially suited to understanding how Pakistan seeks to project itself internationally, and how its foreign policy discourses are constructed from ideas, perceptions, and social interactions rather than from material power alone.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Public diplomacy has changed through the years of the foreign policy of Pakistan since independence in 1947, to events of September 11, 2001. That era is key to determine the pillars on which the modern practices of public diplomacy in Pakistan were established. These decades mostly influenced Pakistan to engage with the outside world based on the existential security interests, alliance politics and regional tensions. Consequently, the public diplomacy was undeveloped, divided, and served mostly as a secondary to the traditional, security-based diplomacy.

This period encompasses the development of the diplomatic communication of Pakistan and the image-building activities, as well as projection of the narratives of the country through the lenses of historical and interpretive analysis, through the various political regimes and international settings. It claims that although some aspects of public diplomacy existed during the early foreign policy of Pakistan, they were not institutionalized and coordinated, so their potential could be limited in the long term.

Public Diplomacy in the Early Years of Pakistan (1947–1958)

Pakistan had huge political, economic and security challenges during the period of independence. Being one of the newly formed states, its main foreign policy aims were to gain international recognition, territorial integrity and resolution of the situation with Jammu and Kashmir. These were the pressing issues that influenced the initial diplomatic priorities in Pakistan, and there was no space to organize the systematic public diplomacy (Sattar, 2019).

During the short-term of independence, Pakistan had to use formal diplomatic relations especially in the United Nations in its interactions with the global community. Through international forums, the Pakistani leaders were able to place the emphasis on the Kashmir issue, Muslim causes, and demand the support of the world in moral and political terms. Although these endeavors entailed some aspects of narrative projection, they were mostly elite based and directed at government-government diplomacy as opposed to government involvement with the foreign populace (Haqqani, 2013).

The cultural diplomacy was low during this era, and was more informal. The rich cultural heritage, linguistic diversity and artistic traditions of Pakistan were not mobilized as a tool of soft power. The lack of special cultural and public diplomatic institutions indicated the weakness of the administrative ability of the state and the pre-eminence of security interests in thought of foreign policy. According to constructivist approach the international identity of Pakistan at this time was largely shaped along the lines of Islamic solidarity and post-colonial legitimacy as opposed to cultural or social interaction (Burke, 1973).

Cold War Alignment and Alliance Politics (1958–1971)

A major change in the foreign policy happened during the cold war, especially after the formation of security alliances between Pakistan and the United States in the form of SEATO and CENTO. This happened to have a significant

effect on the way Pakistan was viewed internationally and how it communicated. Instead of having an independent national image, the image of Pakistan as an external destination was tightly bound to its position as a strategic ally of the west (McMahon, 1994).

During this age, there was limited public diplomacy that was almost in a reactive manner. Western media exposure and development assistance favored Pakistan but the engagements were made based on the strategy factor and not the conscious strategy of public diplomacy. There existed cultural and educational exchange but most of the time, which was triggered by outside forces especially the United States and not triggered by Pakistan itself (Nye, 2004).

In 1958, the military coup further concentrated foreign policy decisions and enhanced the preeminence of security interests. Pakistan was stressed as having strategic importance in the containment of communism and little emphasis was given to large-scale involvement with foreign publics through diplomatic communication. Consequently, the research of the public diplomacy of Pakistan as a country did not have its independence and long-term perspective and supported the narratives based on the alliances, not on domestic soft power projection.

The Impact of the 1971 War and Identity Crisis

The partitioning of Pakistan in 1971 was a major crisis to the national identity of the country and its international remarkable status. The establishment of Bangladesh brought out the limitation of the foreign policy of Pakistan and the impact of ignoring domestic integration and image control in the international level. The publicity about the conflict in the international media had a great negative impact on the image of Pakistan especially on the issue of human rights (Bass, 2013).

Pakistan had the problem of rebuilding the national image and modeling its identity in the aftermath of 1971. As long as efforts of diplomacy were directed towards restoring bilateral relations and winning international acceptance, public diplomacy was a backburner. To respond to reputational damage or directly involve foreign publics, the state did not have institutional means (Cohen, 2004).

In constructivist view, the crisis in 1971 transformed the identity narratives of Pakistan whereby focus on sovereignty, resilience, and Islamic unity were given more emphasis. Nevertheless, those stories were mostly shared using official diplomatic methods, and not the public diplomacy, which had a narrower reach and effectiveness (Cohen, 2004).

Islamization and Narrative Projection under Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988)

Islamization was one of the processes which brought a new ideological touch to the foreign policy of Pakistan by the military regime led by General Zia-ul-Haq. At this stage, Pakistan began to identify itself more as an Islamic state and a protector of the Muslim cause. This ideological tendency affected the communication of Pakistan diplomacy and international image.

Pakistan was also advanced in strategic significance with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Pakistan was put on the frontline in the Afghan jihad and got considerable world publicity and support, especially the United States and Muslim nations. Pakistan came into the limelight of the world community, but its story was mostly put into the frame of the security and ideological struggle (Haqqani, 2013).

The ideological messages that characterized public diplomacy had a great impact in this period than the cultural and societal interactions. The international images of Pakistan were more linked to militancy and religious conservatism and these images replaced other dimensions of Pakistani nationality. Pakistan could not effectively control these perceptions or create a more sophisticated image because the country did not have a balanced strategy of the implementation of its public diplomacy.

Democratic Interludes and Limited Public Outreach (1988–1999)

The reinstatement of civilian governance in late 1980s increased anticipations of a more diverse and humanistic foreign policy. But the scope of reformation of the public diplomacy was limited

due to the political instability, often change of government and the military still could influence the changes. Foreign policy was still reactive and institutional ability to engage internationally on a long-term basis was low.

Pakistan did display some efforts of involving international media and popularizing cultural activities abroad during this period but this was not coordinated as the efforts were disjointed. Social problems and political struggles within the domestic sphere further decreased funding in the institutions of public diplomacy.

Another milestone in the image of Pakistan in the international arena was the nuclear tests of 1998. Although the tests helped Pakistan to strengthen her strategic deterrence, it also resulted in international sanctions and bad publicity. The reaction of Pakistan was based mostly on the official declarations and the lobbying of the diplomatic bodies, which again shows the lack of proactive public diplomacy model that can involve the foreign populations and justify policy decisions on a bigger platform (Nye, 2011).

Assessment of Pre-9/11 Public Diplomacy in Pakistan

Before 9/11, public diplomacy in Pakistan was not developed and usually became secondary to the needs of the traditional diplomacy and security issues. The priorities of the foreign policy at this time were largely based on strategic alliances, co-operation in defense affairs and the geopolitical gambit and little room was available to conduct systematic interaction with foreign publics. Although at times Pakistan was demonstrating its stories via the international forums, diplomatic missions, and media channels, these were fundamentally reactive and sensitive to particular events or crises and it did not aim at a long-term outlook to global interaction (Burke, 1973).

The prevalence of security-oriented foreign policy in the country during this time was one of the features of this era. The national security, military collaboration and defense interests always overrode the cultural, educational or any other societal involvement. Consequently, the public diplomacy programs were frequently closely focused on the geopolitical compliance, the opposition to the alleged threats or the military agenda. Such emphasis limited the extent of interaction with the external world, which did not allow demonstrating a multidimensional and recognizable national image that would gain a worldly response or praise (Nawaz, 2008).

The other weakness was the lack of specialized bodies to manage and coordinate the public diplomacy. Work was divided between various ministries, military departments, and cultural organizations and no unified body of authority was in charge of strategy, planning or evaluation. The absence of institutional frameworks slowed the process of professionalism and continuity as well as the strategic unity, and initiatives were prone to ad hoc decision-making and change in political or military priorities. In the absence of a centralized coordination, there were inconsistencies in messages, and there were missed chances to develop a sustained influence in overseas countries (Burke, 1973).

Cultural and societal involvement as an influence tool were barely used during this time. The rich cultural heritage and the artistic traditions, as well as the educational networks, were not systematically used in Pakistan in reaching the international audiences. Cultural diplomacy, student exchange, and people to people activities were not fully exploited thus reducing the chances of building long term relationships and understanding. This loophole made Pakistan very dependent on the official stories and the message based on alliances, which made it incapable of projecting soft power meaningfully and plausibly (Nye, 2004).

Civilian and military actors' coordination was also poor which limited the effectiveness of the public diplomacy. The civilian institutions were usually relegated in the process of forming the narratives, and the communication led by military was more concerned with the security and strategic consequences. Such lack of balance weakened diversity of the points of view shown to external sources and narrowed the relational aspect of interaction. The absence of internalized lines of communication among various stakeholders made it challenging to have coherent and consistent

messages that would cut across various platforms and situations (Nawaz, 2008).

Depending on alliances as a narration also influenced the international communication of Pakistan in the same era. The content of the messaging tended to focus on how Pakistan aligned with the major strategic partners especially during the Cold War relations and the issue of regional security. Although such stories strengthened strategic relationships, they did not leave much space to engage in culture, humanitarian or developmental activities independently. Focusing on alliances rather than self-projection, Pakistan did not give itself the chance to develop a unique, appealing and believable image to the rest of the world, and foreign audiences received a very limited picture of the identity and potential of the country (Burke, 1973).

Comprehensively, the pre-9/11 years left Pakistan unprepared to handle the high international attention which would come in its tail after global interests in counterterrorism. The conspicuity of security preoccupation, institutional disaggregation, poor civilian-military coordination, limited culture work and dependence on alliance discourses resulted in a reactive, inconsistent and operationally constrained public diplomacy environment. These failings highlight the pressing necessity to create a more institutionalized, professionalized, and multidimensional method of public diplomacy, which would make Pakistan able to communicate with foreign audiences and create an enduring impression in the post-9/11 international environment.

CONCLUSION

Public diplomacy has become a vital aspect of international relations due to the rise in realization that global power transcends far beyond the military or economic strength. Perception, credibility and cultural resonance are important factors that determine the image of the states and their international interaction in the modern world. In the case of Pakistan, public diplomacy is an exceptional chance to introduce soft power, formulate narratives, and contribute to the world conversation. The country has a rich cultural heritage, strong and extensive diaspora and the history of educational and media presence which can be used strategically to increase its international presence. However, even despite these natural benefits, the work of the public diplomacy of Pakistan, according to the author, is mostly disunited and insufficiently developed, not allowing to give full effect to its potential power.

Public diplomacy of Pakistan can be considered as both a great opportunity and a prominent challenge at the same time. The country boasts of a fair number of resources in form of cultural heritage, diaspora networks and media potential that can be exploited to add to its soft power and international credibility. But, in the absence of structural reform, strategic vision, coordination and alignment between domestic governance and foreign policy, these resources underutilized. The enhanced, institutionally backed, and deliberately coordinated system of public diplomacy can turn this sphere into a marginal activity into one of the primary foreign policy tools. In this way, Pakistan be able to enhance its image on the global level, build a better relationship with the world and become an active contributor to the creation of the narratives that serves its national interests, identity, and values.

WAY FORWARD

Based on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed to strengthen Pakistan's public diplomacy framework:

1.1.1 Institutionalization of Public Diplomacy

Pakistan should establish a centralized and dedicated public diplomacy framework within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This framework should have clear mandates, professional staffing, and long-term strategic planning authority to ensure continuity beyond political cycles.

1.1.2 Civilian Leadership and Inclusive Engagement

Public diplomacy should be led primarily by civilian institutions, with active participation from academia, cultural organizations, artists, media professionals, and civil society. Reducing

overreliance on military-led narratives allows for more diverse, credible, and relational engagement with foreign publics.

1.1.3 Development of a Long-Term National Narrative

Pakistan must articulate a coherent and forward-looking national narrative that emphasizes peace, cultural diversity, economic potential, and global responsibility. This narrative should be consistent across diplomatic missions, digital platforms, and international engagements.

1.1.4 Strengthening Cultural and Educational Diplomacy

Greater investment should be made in cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, academic collaboration, and language promotion. These tools foster long-term relationships and enhance mutual understanding, making them central to sustainable soft power.

1.1.5 Strategic Use of Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy should move beyond reactive crisis communication and adopt a proactive engagement model. Training diplomats in digital communication, audience analysis, and narrative framing is essential for effective online engagement.

1.1.6 Institutionalized Diaspora Diplomacy

Pakistan should develop a structured diaspora diplomacy policy that mobilizes overseas Pakistanis as cultural ambassadors, economic partners, and advocates. This requires depoliticized engagement and institutional continuity.

1.1.7 Alignment of Domestic Governance and External Messaging

Public diplomacy efforts must be supported by improvements in governance, transparency, and human rights practices. Credibility at home strengthens attraction abroad and enhances the effectiveness of diplomatic communication.

1.2 Contribution of the Study

This research makes several key contributions:

- It provides a comprehensive, longitudinal analysis of public diplomacy in Pakistan's foreign policy from 1947 to the present.
- It integrates theoretical frameworks with empirical historical analysis, addressing a gap in existing literature.
- It shifts the focus from security-centric explanations to narrative, perception, and soft power analysis.
- It offers policy-relevant recommendations grounded in scholarly research.

By doing so, the study enriches both academic scholarship and policy discourse on public diplomacy in developing states.

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