

# Pakistan's response to the Afghan war (1979-1988): In the Neo-classical Realism perspective

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## ABSTRACT

Most researchers condemn the fact that the foreign policy of Pakistan was not befitting during the war in Afghanistan since its consequences outweighed the gains to the country during the period. This is one of the criticisms that are repeatedly emphasized and strengthened on the foreign policy debate, as the war in Afghanistan made a lasting influence on the politics, economy and security of Pakistan. But little focus is given in terms of the examination of the Pakistani reaction to the Afghan war in the view of Neo-classical Realism. Since the world is anarchic, all the states have to act on their national interests, and Pakistan as any other state had to react with the system of anarchy. A nation can further be seen to be in terms of the international relations theory, since theories offer an analysis model to explain judgments that might seem conflicting or incongruent. Among others, there exist two international relations theories Realism and Liberalism, which are more appropriate to examine the behavior of a nation under pressure. Realism focuses on power, security, and survival whereas Liberalism focuses on cooperation, institutions and interdependence. But the Neo-classical Realism is of the opinion that internal and external factors should be combined to comprehend the behaviour of states. The external influences include the force of balance, alliances, and world pressures which interacts with internal influences of leadership, political constraints, economic conditions, and domestic pressures. The paper will thus seek to discuss the internal and external forces that forced Pakistan to take a position in the Afghan war. By concentrating on Neo-classical Realism, this paper will indicate why Pakistan had to do what it did, how its leadership had to juggle between national interests and international demands, as well as why their foreign policy decisions were influenced by a set of national and global realities.

## KEYWORDS:

Pakistan, Afghan War, Foreign Policy, Neo-classical Realism, Internal Factors, External Factors, National Interest, International Relations

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## INTRODUCTION

Neoclassical realism is one of the basic characteristics of the realist paradigm about the nature of international relations, besides Classical Realism and Neorealism, but Neoclassical realism believes that distribution of power is the vital independent variable in determining the dependent variable (foreign policy of a state) (Babic, 2025; Schmidt and Juneau, 2024). This position highlights the central importance of power and the way in which it is distributed in the international system. The “intervening variables” refer to the system of government, leaders’ perceptions, and so on, which play an equally crucial role in shaping outcomes, because they determine how external pressures are translated into domestic choices. According to Tatyana Romanova, a wider definition of Neoclassical realism would pronounce it as a search for an answer to why the pressure of the regional and global factors produces a certain type of foreign policy (Malaviya, 2025; Romanova, 2012). This means that Neoclassical realism not only accepts the anarchic nature of the international system but also insists that domestic structures, institutions, and leadership perceptions mediate external pressures.

If we take an example of the famous metaphor “billiard ball,” Neoclassical realism contends that the properties of a billiard ball affect the tactics of states. In this metaphor, states are not simply hard shells bouncing off each other; rather, their inner properties such as leadership



qualities, regime type, and political stability determine how they react under collision. In short, the foreign policy of a state can be determined by the external factors and the domestic factors (Northedge, 1986; Reichwein, 2024). Therefore, the foreign policy of a state is the result of interaction between domestic (internal) and external factors, and neither can be ignored if one wishes to understand foreign policy choices.

It is the anarchic international system that compels states to act according to their self-help, but the self-help principle itself is filtered through the internal characteristics of the state. The changes in the anarchic system have an impact on Pakistan, which compelled it to become engaged in the Afghan war, but at the same time, Pakistan's internal politics, leadership calculations, and security concerns also shaped this engagement. This paper examines the internal and external factors that shaped Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Afghan War. Neoclassical realism is applied to this study because it is compatible with the research question of what factors compelled Pakistan to act in a certain way towards the Afghan War, making it the most suitable theoretical lens to explain the complexity of Pakistan's decisions in a turbulent regional and global environment.

## BACKGROUND

On December 27, 1979 Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan, which posed a security threat to Pakistan. The attack of the Soviet Union on its neighboring country was seen by Pakistan as the violation of a sovereign, non-aligned, and Muslim country by a superpower. This intervention created deep concerns in Pakistan about its national security, regional stability, and ideological commitments, as Afghanistan shared not only a border but also cultural and religious ties with Pakistan. Pakistan and USSR relations were not smooth, which threatened Pakistan that it might provide assistance to the insurgent element in Pakistan and would pose direct military pressure on the state. The fear of encirclement, the possibility of Soviet influence spreading further into South Asia, and the historical mistrust between Pakistan and USSR made the situation even more alarming for Islamabad. Therefore, Pakistan sided with the Afghan rebels against the Soviet Red Army and the Communist Regime of Afghanistan (Rizvi, 2004; Rodríguez, 2024). This alignment was not only a strategic move but also a response influenced by external and internal pressures.

### Research Question

1. What were the factors that compelled Pakistan to take certain actions towards the Afghan War?

The research question focuses directly on identifying both the external and internal determinants of Pakistan's decision-making during the Afghan war. It is framed to explore the complexity of foreign policy decisions in a turbulent international environment.

### Research Objective

1. To analyze the factors behind Pakistan's foreign policy toward the Afghan war.

The research objective aims to systematically examine the underlying motivations of Pakistan's stance, considering the anarchic nature of international politics, domestic calculations, and geopolitical compulsions.

### Significance of the Study

This paper makes an immense contribution to the existing literature on the foreign policy of Pakistan. It will give an insight that foreign policy decisions are not taken in isolation, but

several factors contribute to a state taking a certain policy decision. This study enables the reader to understand how a state's action can be determined by the external and internal factors; hence, every state is compelled to take certain action in response to a major shift in the international scenario in context. By applying this approach, the study not only highlights Pakistan's experience but also provides a framework to understand foreign policy behavior of states confronted with great power interventions and regional instability.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper is conducted through qualitative method using the analysis of secondary data: books, and research papers.

## PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE AFGHAN WAR

On December 27, 1979 Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan and this was a direct and serious security threat to Pakistan. Pakistan perceived the Soviet Union assaulting its neighboring nation as the aggression of a sovereign, non-aligned as well as Muslim nation by a super power (Azizi and Batish, 2025). This was a geopolitical challenge, not only to Pakistan but also ideological and cultural shock considering that Afghanistan was the closest and shared border with Pakistan in terms of religion. The nature of the Pakistan- USSR relations was not pleasant and this posed a threat to Pakistan that it could be giving support to the rebellious component within Pakistan and would directly exert military pressure on the state. With such a strategic setting, Pakistan was on the same side with the Afghanistan rebels against the Soviet Red Army and the Communist Regime of Afghanistan (Rizvi, 2004; Tayah, Adam, and Esmail, 2025). This was influenced by a number of external and internal pressures that led to this alignment as discussed below. To provide a clearer understanding, a conceptual framework has been developed (see Figure ??), which visually maps out how external factors such as international gravity, instability in Afghanistan, alliance with the USA, India's stance, and the desire for a friendly Afghan government, along with internal factors such as constitutional changes, Zia's Islamic views, authoritarian rule, referendum, and restriction on media, collectively shaped Pakistan's foreign policy toward the Afghan War.

## EXTERNAL FACTORS

The country became the arena of international seriousness, where many major powers collided in Afghanistan. Interests were at stake with the USA, USSR, China, India, and Pakistan. This competition had turned Afghanistan into a Cold War battlefield. Pakistan was not in a position to stay neutral in the conflict because of its geographical location.

There was internal instability in Afghanistan. Developments in Afghanistan were extremely divided between the Khalqi and the Parchami, and the policy of oppression by the AGSA, an agency of the Afghan government, isolated people even more (Shaffer and Ashraf, 2025). The crisis was aggravated by brutal repression, such as the massacre of approximately 25,000 individuals in Herat, and unpopular policies to do with land redistribution, education, and women rights. The peak of this instability was the Soviet intervention of 1979.

The friendship between Pakistan and the USA became one of the characteristic aspects of the policy of the country in Afghanistan. Washington promised huge financial and military aid to Pakistan and the Reagan package worth over 3 billion dollars. This was a boost that enabled Pakistan to act as a frontline state against communism.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework of Pakistan's foreign policy in the Afghan War, showing external and internal factors.

The fact that India funded a communist government of Afghanistan and that it was allied to the Soviet Union also posed an additional threat to the security environment of Pakistan. Islamabad was threatened of being surrounded by the west and the east.

Pakistan as well wanted an amiable Afghan administration that would not favor the Pashtunistan problem and would balance the influence of India in Kabul. Therefore, not only the survival but also the long-term influence in the region became the goal in supporting the Mujahideen.

To the point, the external environment of Pakistan that included Soviet aggression, instability in Afghanistan, pro-Soviet position of India and the U.S partnership forced Pakistan to make some decisive measures in the Afghanistan War as represented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** External Factors Influencing Pakistan's Policy in the Afghan War

Factor	Description
International Gravity	Afghanistan became the ground of international gravity with involvement of USA, USSR, China, India, and Pakistan, each pursuing national interests.
Unstable Afghanistan	Internal communist divisions (Khalqi vs Parchami), brutal suppression by AGSA, unpopular reforms, Herat uprising, and Soviet intervention worsened instability.
Alliance with USA	Pakistan allied with the USA against USSR, securing financial/military aid (e.g., \$3 billion Reagan package).
India's Position	India supported the communist Afghan regime and leaned toward USSR, deepening Pakistan's insecurity.
Desire for Friendly Afghanistan	Pakistan sought to counter Indian influence and Pashtunistan issue by promoting a pro-Pakistan Afghan government.
Shift in Foreign Policy	Pakistan shifted from non-alignment toward active opposition to USSR, hosting refugees and backing Afghan Mujahideen.

### 1.0.1 International Gravity

Afghanistan became a ground of international gravity by the involvement of many actors in the war, besides its own people's opposition to the regime. Every state interfered in the Afghan war according to its national interest. American involvement could be understood in the context of revenge and defeat faced in the Vietnam War, backed by its Cold War rival Soviet Union (Gates, 2006; Maguire et al., 2025). The Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan to avoid the spread of insurgency to its own land (Fremont-Barnes, 2012). Pakistan wanted to enhance its influence in Afghanistan, to work on its nuclear program, and see the Soviet-Afghan war as a threat to Pakistan's security (Coll, 2004). China opposed Soviet intervention in Afghanistan publicly and viewed USSR actions as "Soviet causes belli, can fool no one" (Bradsher, 1985). China is involved in the Afghan war to sell its cheap weapons to expand its market (Crile, 2003)(Raby, 2024). India favored and supported the Afghan government and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (Hameed, 2012). In short, the Afghanistan war became a ground of international conflict with all regional and international players having their interests involved.

### 1.0.2 Unstable Afghanistan

To better understand the origin of the Soviet-Afghan war, an overview of the internal politics of Afghanistan 20 months before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is necessary to mention. In April 1978, a communist group of Soviet trained, comprised of communist air force officers and army, overthrew the regime of President Daoud (Tripathi, 2024). The coup resulted in the appointment of Nor Mohammed Taraki as president and prime minister, while Hafizullah Amin as foreign minister of Afghanistan and Babrak Karmal as deputy prime minister. All of the important figures were from the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDA) of both parts of communist parties. However, the communist party of Afghanistan was divided into two segments itself: Khalqi and Parchami. It was a risky decision to have two different sections of the party at the government resulted in Karmal being posted to Czechoslovakia as a designation of Ambassador of Afghanistan, as well as other Parchami associates being sent to other countries as diplomats, which led to the domination of the Khalqi faction within the regime. The secret police of AGSA (Afghanistan Gatto Satoonkai Aidara, Department for Safeguarding the Interests of Afghanistan) was used to suppress the opponents to the Khalqi regime. Pul-e Charkhi prison in Kabul was famous for the killing of people without a legal trial. The regime that ruled the country with Marxist ideology was not supported by the people. The regime introduced reforms: choice in marriage to women, co-education, elimination of bride price, compulsory schooling for girls, eradication of peasants' debts to landowners that caused a restless in the conservative rural sector and resulted in resistance against the regime on religious grounds. The peasant class little supported the regime, while the workers and peasants rejected the Marxist ideology and provoked armed resistance. The lower-class personals in army left their units either joined the resistance or returned to their home taking their skills and arms with them, yet Taraki remained associate with Marxist ideology and strengthen his ties with USSR by signing a treaty on 5 December 1978 for military and economic assistance from Soviet, beside twenty years of "friendship and co-operation" between two countries, which was used by USSR as a justification in accordance with Article 4 of treaty cited in term of military co-operation (Fremont-Barnes, 2012).

On 15 March 1979, a mass uprising against the regime started in Herat. Most of the 17th Division joined the revolt; they killed several Soviet advisors and government officials. The

military occupied Herat, bombed the city and the rebels; Approximately five thousand people were killed. The brutal approach of the regime, moreover, alienated many other soldiers from joining the rebellious movement, which decreased the army's strength by less than half its official strength of 90,000 personnel. The revolt in Herat accelerated the uprising that spread across the country, with opposition declared through mosques and village elders who condemned Marxism as anti-Muslims and atheistic by declaring a fight against the regime. The resistance movement desired to establish an Islamic government in Afghanistan, which was influenced by the Iranian revolution that occurred in Iran under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Soviets feared that any threat to Marxist ideology would threaten its hold on Eastern Europe. Any disturbance in Afghanistan would have a direct influence on the USSR (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan), which would be a serious concern for Soviet's integrity. The Soviets focused more concentration on Afghanistan after the Herat uprising. On 17 March, Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet foreign minister, stated that Afghanistan should not drift away from the Soviet Union. Taraki was unable to control the internal situation of the country and repeatedly requested the Soviet intervention to assist in maintaining the law and order situation in Afghanistan, but the Soviets refused direct intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan in order to avoid aggravating the situation. A coup by Amin that ousted Taraki from power changed the Soviet attitude towards Afghanistan, as well as worsening the internal situation of the state. Amin's rule increased the terror by AGSA then renamed as KhaD (Khedamat-e Ettelaat-e Dawlati or State Intelligence Agency). The Soviet Union distanced itself from the Amin regime because of its internal brutality and distress, which left no hope with Amin to establish relations with America. Unfortunately, the U.S looked disapprovingly towards the Amin regime after February when Afghan security forces ruined a salvage attempt to rescue the USA ambassador in Kabul from unknown kidnapers. Furthermore, the U.S attention from Kabul was diverted by the Iranian hostage crisis. In mid-1979, the Afghan economy worsened, and the rebels, who were called mujahedin, became influential in the downfall of Amin's regime. KGB consultants visited the state to become aware of the best way to safeguard a speedy subjection of the country with less interference from Afghan forces. Last but not least Soviet Red Army invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 (Fremont-Barnes, 2012).

### **1.0.3 Factors responsible for the uprising status of Afghanistan from 1978 to 1979**

There were many factors that had an impact on the Afghan uprising against their communist rule. Firstly, the fragile government of Afghanistan, which was dependent on the Soviet its foreign policy decisions. The Soviet-Sino conflict had an impact on Afghanistan as well. People's democratic party of Afghanistan wished to have cordial relations with China, besides their allegiance towards the Soviet which enhanced the burden within the party to follow an independent foreign policy. Secondly, the alternation in the political weather of the region, such as the Iranian revolution, which had an impact on the Afghan people, on the religious perspective which posed a threat to the communist regime, and the reaction of Pakistan toward the internal instability of Afghanistan. In 1978, Islamabad supported the tribal element in Afghanistan against the Afghan communist regime for two purposes: to gain the legitimacy at home of its internal policy and externally counter its enemy: the Afghan regime (Haliday).

#### 1.0.4 Two major alliance systems

The Soviet-Afghan war became a bone of contention between the two major powers. Many other countries were indirectly involved in supporting the rebels against the communist regime of Afghanistan and the USSR. The Afghan war was an international game because superpowers and regional states played their role. The Afghan war led to the establishment of an alliance system. One in support of the USSR's interests in Afghanistan, while another group (Western Alliance) is in opposition to its interests (Bell, 2024; Imran and Xiaochuan, 2016).

#### 1.0.5 Ally with the USA

Mostly, neighboring countries to Afghanistan were in the USA camp. In the Afghan war, Pakistan was an ally of the USA instead of the USSR. Each country had its own interests engaged in the Afghan war. When the USSR invaded Afghanistan, the USA got the confidence of Pakistan to assist the freedom fighters who were against the pro-Soviet communist regime (Imran and Xiaochuan, 2016; Mirzada, 2025).

#### 1.0.6 Convergence and Divergence of interests: USA in war

The Afghan war posed a security threat to Pakistan. It had security as well as other interests to ally with the USA. The coalition of America and Pakistan served some mutual interests against the pro-Soviet government and ousted the USSR from Afghanistan. Washington needed Islamabad's confidence to support the rebels. Secondly, there was a security interest in building an atomic bomb that needed economic assistance in the shape of an alliance with the USA. After President Jimmy Carter assumed office of presidency, he thought that there were many serious matters between both countries (USA and Pakistan), but the situation took a turn with the Afghan war as Pakistan received 3 billion dollars from the Reagan Administration (Imran and Xiaochuan, 2016). Despite some common areas of interest between the two countries, there were divergences of interests, such as Pakistan's nuclear program, but they ignored that matter to highlight further due to the Afghan war (Rizvi, 2004). Without the cooperation of Pakistan, it was difficult for America to support to the Afghan insurgents (Imran and Xiaochuan, 2016).

#### 1.0.7 Involvement in the neighbor's war and Pakistan's role

In the Afghan war, Pakistan supported the desires and wishes of the people of Afghanistan rather than siding with the Afghan communist regime. Pakistan was critical of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, as it perceived Soviet presence on Afghan soil as a risk to its own security and integrity. Pakistan sided with the USA in the Afghan war with the expectation that many of its own interests would be fulfilled rather than being a partner with the USSR (Imran and Xiaochuan, 2016).

#### 1.0.8 India and the Afghan war

Although Pakistan and India are neighboring countries, their relationship has never been cordial since their independence in 1947. The Indo-Afghan relations could be seen in the context of India's rivalry with Pakistan. During the Afghan war, India supported the communist government of Afghanistan as well, and Indian foreign policy was inclined towards the USSR from 1980 to 1989, even though India belonged to the Non-Aligned Movement. Delhi continued

its support to the Afghan regime of Najibullah and his policies of National Reconciliation even after the decision of Soviet withdrawal. India, after the USSR's withdrawal, supported those groups who were less likely to be supported by Pakistan (Babic, 2025; Najibullah, 2017).

India had the utmost desire for a stable, sovereign, united, and free Afghanistan from the outside influence of Pakistan. There were strong diplomatic and cultural ties between India and Afghanistan during King Zahir Shah's rule. Afghanistan was not an adjacent neighbor of India in terms of sharing common borders. India did not oppose the Soviet stance of intervention in Afghanistan in 1979. The rivalry between India and Pakistan could be sensed from an observation of Mr. Parthasarathy, former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, who viewed that reconciliation between Pakistan and India was like treating two patients who were allergic to each other (GUL, IMRAN, and HUSSAIN, 2025; Malone, 2011).

Indira Gandhi, an elected Indian prime minister in the 1980s, assumed a pro-Soviet stance. India supported the soviet view of the withdrawal of limited forces in a limited time period, as well as not criticizing the soviet intervention in the UN General Assembly. She taunted Pakistan's diplomatic pressure on the USSR by saying to the Pakistani ambassador, "Do you expect the UN resolution will force the Soviets to withdraw troops?" (Sattar, 2006).

Pakistan's involvement in the Soviet-Afghan war was based on interests and not entirely on any ideological basis. Pakistan saw an opportunity in which it could counter the long-standing enemy Indian influence and struggle to make a pro-Pakistani government in Afghanistan. The Afghan war was a golden opportunity in the hands of Pakistan to get rid of the Pashtunistan issue and to decrease the Indian and Soviet influence in Afghanistan (Khan, 2025; Rana and Sial, 2013).

Pakistan supported the wishes of the Afghan masses against the communist regime, and soviet forces were regarded by India as a strategic interest to enhance its influence in Afghanistan. India showed its antagonism as the then Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi informed the soviet President that Afghanistan, under the influence of Pakistan, would not be acceptable to India (Ostermann, 2003; Wadud, 2024).

#### **1.0.9 Desire for a friendly government in the neighboring state**

Pakistan wished for a friendly government in Afghanistan in order to avoid instability at home. The Afghan war was seen as an opportunity for Pakistan to change the hostile Kabul government and its long desire for a friendly government in its neighbor to counter the Indian inspiration and the Pashtunistan issue that posed a threat to Pakistan (Sial, 2013).

#### **1.0.10 Shift in Pakistan's foreign policy during the Afghan war**

Pakistan withdrew from SEATO and the Commonwealth in November and January 1972, respectively. It adopted a policy of mutual interests and bilateralism rather than permanent alignment. Before the Afghan war, Pakistan had become a member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979. Non-aligned foreign policy resulted in the greater identification of the issues and causes of the developing countries. The relation between China and Pakistan became friendlier and flourished during this period. The Afghan war caused a change in Pakistan's foreign policy by starting to support the rebels against the communist regime and opposed the USSR invasion in Afghanistan, and by opening doors for refugees who sought asylum from the brutality of war inside Afghanistan (Rizvi, 2004).

## INTERNAL FACTORS

### Constitutional changes and an increase in the President's power

President Zia-ul-Haq ruled the country from 1977 to 1988, and he had modified the constitution of 1973, increasing the President's power (Shah, 2012). He had been in favour of the presidential system since 1977, which was evident mostly in his speeches in which he regarded the presidential system as mostly near to Islam. In his speech to Majlis-e-Shura in August 1983, he blamed the parliamentary system that was responsible to the chaos created in 1977. He made the 8th amendment to the Constitution in such a way as not to disturb the shape of parliamentary character while transmitting it into the presidential system. The 8th Amendment gave much power to the president and provided all the safety measures for actions taken by him under martial law. When the amendment was implemented than martial law was lifted (Waseem, 1998). The 8th Amendment increased the powers of the President to dissolve the assemblies based on his subjective judgment of their performance. Furthermore, the amendment to the constitution of 1973 extended the rule of Zia to eleven years and even handled his political enemies. Zia banned daily basis of political activities and crumbled fundamental rights. The 8th amendment to the original constitution of 1973 was done by the introduction of 58(2)(b) that resulted in a tremendous increase in presidential power by even giving the power to the president to control the elected assemblies: It damaged the executive, judiciary, and legislative. It provided "safety value" against the imposition of martial law and constitutional cover for exercising authoritative rule. It drew the judiciary into political battles by giving it the role to decide controversial cases by validating the presidential ordinances, which was caused because of the marginalized representation, accountability of political activities, displacement of political space, and pluralists. 58(2)(b) was basically an amendment of the constitution of the 1973, caused a huge change in balance of power between president and prime minister: the power of the president in the original constitution of 1973 was mere a rubber stamp and was to be worked under the advice of prime minister but the amendment implant the huge power to the president even without concerning the advice of the prime minister or concern minister in the performance of his duties. Martial law was lifted in 1985, and the elections were held in the same year. The amendment favours Zia the most in terms of facing the political environment around him. He ruled the country with new power assigned to him through the 8th amendment till 1988 (Siddique, 2006).

### Zia's Islamic views

Zia had similar views to Maulana Maudoodi related to the concept of the Islamic state and philosophy for leadership of the state. The mentor to whom Zia was inspired was the founder of the political-religious Deobandi party under the banner of Jamaat-i-Islami. Zia was the first ruler who introduced the process of Islamization (Shah, 2012).

Maulana Maudoodi's objective was the revival of Islam, firstly in the sub-continent before the independence of Pakistan, and after that in the broader world. His teaching was based on the conservative laws of the majority Sunni Muslim religion. He thought that a socio-religious system should be formed in accordance with the directions practiced by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the first four caliphs. He was in favor of "ijtihad" but for the "selected few". He rejected the development in Islamic law, philosophy, theology, and last but not least the institutional structures of the modern Islamic states, such as Algeria or Egypt had western-style parliaments (Cooley, 1999).

It is also important to know the background of Zia's family, besides his inspiration from Maulana Maudoodi, to better regarding his views. He was born in 1927 in an Arian family from Jullundur. His father, Akbar Ali, was a religious and orthodox follower but believed in the dictum "knowledge is power". He was a clerk at the railway. He sent his son to the famous St. Stephen's school of Delhi by the Cambridge Mission. St. Stephen had a great impact on the religious aspect of Zia. Akbar Ali intended to provide quality education and a military career for his son, but Arian was considered a non-martial race which meant that racial consciousness was present in selecting a military career. Zia joined the army during World War second, when there was a need for the army for the British, so the master avoided the racial categorization and found employment in the previously downgraded group (non-martial race). In 1947, Zia's family moved to Pakistan, where opportunities for the incoming were waiting because of shortcomings of the military and civil officers. He joined the Pakistan army. Zia was a religious follower in prayers and other rituals of Islam, except for his habit of smoking. According to Roedad Khan, "for the first time, a maulvi, a deeply religious person, was the Head of the state, the Head of Government and the army Chief- a frightening combination". Roedad Khan's opinion about Zia was "determined to recreate the Islamic legal and social order which had originated in the tribal area more than a thousand years ago". Similar impersonations were viewed by Lawrence Ziring (Zahid, 2011).

## **AUTHORITARIAN RULE**

Zia-ul-Haq came into power as a result of a military coup in Pakistan. His regime was characterized by authoritative rule, ranging from restrictions on the media, judicial murder of the rival, oppression, and the worst era of human rights violations. He put the constitution into abeyance and amended it later, which increased the presidential power. The oppressive regime had a worse effect on democracy, the judiciary, the constitution, and civil society. The Supreme Court of Pakistan even sided with the military dictator, as seen from the Nusrat Bhutto case held in 1977 under the umbrella of law of necessity and legitimized the military rule. Various restrictions had been imposed upon different political parties' leaders. Moreover, he had no trust in the politicians of his time. He launched a brand of Islamic democracy with the collaboration of Ulema, "suited to the psyche of the people". The Ansari Commission Report, which was more inclined towards the presidential system, opposed political parties and therefore paved the way for the Islamized political agenda of Zia. Moreover, he created every hurdle to block the way of democracy. He imposed all types of suppression against his rivals and promoters of democracy. Opponents who were against the authoritarian motivation were "publicly lashed". In 1982, Amnesty International blamed Pakistan of wickedest human rights violations (Zahid, 2011).

## **REFERENDUM**

To attain legitimacy for his rule, Zia conducted the referendum in 1984. The referendum was one of the controversial referendums held in the history of Pakistan. The question that was asked of the public in the referendum was very complicated: the question that confused laymen in their decision, because a yes to Islamization would indirectly translate into a yes vote to Zia. , but he denied that he took a vote on Islam. There was a low turnout of less than 10 to 15 percent, yet it was officially mentioned as 62.15 percent turnout out but its result gave legitimacy to the Zia. However, Zia received congratulatory messages from outside and inside the country for winning the referendum (Zahid, 2011). The referendum made him president for a term of five

years (Iqbal and Shabir, 2010).

## RESTRICTION ON MEDIA

There were many reasons to restrain the freedom of the media, but the most important one was to avoid the criticism of the government. Many steps had been taken to suppress the press and confined its activities to “handout, telephone and utterance-based journalism”, with no effort of journalism based on investigations and interpretations. Under Zia’s rule, the media was put under restriction from 1979 to 1989. In 1979 government imposed pre-censorship on the press by MLR 49 to act as a prerequisite for shariah, democracy, and stability. The act resulted in the working of only two monthlies, five dailies, and six weeklies. The media was restricted in spreading democratic values. The freedom of speech was restrained by the introduction of amendments in sections 499 and 500 Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). The government suggested the restrictions on media under 499 and 500 were as “responsible citizens from the irresponsible journalists”. In short, any journalist who would be critical of government activities would be held accountable under amended sections 499 and 500 PPC. The press action in line with government wishes was liked, so it was responsible, and if not, then it would be regarded as irresponsible. Self-censorship was introduced, replacing pre-censorship in 1982, in order to strengthen the government’s hold on political affairs and mass support. The replacement of pre-censorship to self-censorship, viewed by Zamir Niazi as “the pen was unchained while the hand wielded it was cuffed”. The government introduced MLR 4 and MLR 15 to guide the press on what content should be published and which content matters should not be published. MLR 48 was issued, which imposed restrictions upon the media in the publication of political views. Therefore, the media became under the government by taking care of the will and wish of the latter while performing of own duty. The amendments in 499-500 PPC and MLRs resulted in the closure of many newspapers and arrests of journalists who were critical of government activities (Iqbal and Shabir, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

Behind every foreign policy can be influenced by certain external and domestic factors behind every move and the Afghan war was no exception. The Afghan war provided a variety of situations, which compelled Pakistan to follow a specific foreign policy. The environment in which Pakistan operated was directly influenced by many external factors like the international structure, the regional changes which were taking place, the current instability in Afghanistan and the international gravity in Afghanistan. These are external realities that had left Pakistan with few options of reacting strategically since they would have jeopardized its national security and political position in the international front by leaving it unattended.

Meanwhile, internal factors were also of great importance. The strongest of these was the authoritarian rule of Zia who had a guiding influence on the foreign policy outlook of Pakistan. The blocking of media by his government established a warped report on the Afghan war and how it would apply to Pakistan, thus converting more people to support the course of action taken by the regime. Moreover, Zia advanced the concept of an Islamic democracy that would be appropriate to the psyche of the populace which he associated with his overall plan of Islamization. Nevertheless, this Islamization did not follow the Islamic Rules of 1400 years ago but formed an interpretation of Islamic Rules to meet the political requirements of the modern times. According to Roedad Khan, Zia was determined to restore the Islamic legal and social order that had first emerged in the tribal region over a millennium ago and he hoped to employ

this ideological agenda to legitimize his policies as well as his own right to rule.

Therefore, these external and internal factors together forced Pakistan to make some foreign policy decisions, which could otherwise have been varied at a different time. It is made evident that the foreign policy that Pakistan followed during the Afghan war was not the product of any solitary decisions, but quite the opposite, it was the product of the events that had taken place in the foreign and domestic sphere. Therefore, according to the Neo-classical realism, in which external pressures, as well as domestic intervening variables, play an important role, the actions of Pakistan were appropriate in that time period due to a variety of internal and external factors that compelled the Land of the Pure to make certain steps.

## CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

**Sara Khan:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation, Visualization, Investigation, Validation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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