

YEF Overview on Foreign Relations Progress in 2018-2019

On 18 August 2019, Pakistan Tehreek-e Insaf completed its one-year anniversary of being elected to power by the people of Pakistan. The government is still in its learning phase, trying to move towards improving the socio-political and economic state of people and although the overall performance of the government is up for debate, one aspect that the PTI government has performed exceptionally well over the last year is foreign relations and diplomacy.

When Shah Mahmood Qureshi was appointed Foreign Minister in 2018 the Pakistani state was isolated at the international level. He was tasked with the huge responsibility of developing ties with other countries and improving the image of Pakistan globally. The Foreign Ministry, under the guidance of Prime Minister Imran Khan, has made diplomatic efforts to enhance the country's image as a peaceful country. These very efforts have led to significant investment inflows, some at the hands of overseas Pakistanis and thus improving the status of Pakistan in the world's eyes.

As the first initiative to attract global attention, the government started work at Kartarpur Corridor to try and open peace dialogue with India. Moreover, Pakistan has also committed to play an important role in the Afghan Peace Process: the power negotiations between the Afghan Taliban and the Trump administration as the latter attempts to exit the country. This is a crucial geopolitical stance to restore peace in South Asia and sustain good relations with the Afghan state. This was deliberated during the Prime Minister's recent tour of the United States which was a huge step in bringing the two countries closer and renews relations based on mutual interest. President Trump's offer to mediate in Kashmir was deemed a big success for the country and was highly appreciated by the world community.

On the economic front, the government has successfully strengthened strong financial ties with various Arab leaders. PM Imran Khan personally met with various leaders from Saudi Arabia and the UAE and consequentially his diplomatic efforts led to the release of many Pakistani prisoners from jail by the Arab countries. Moreover, the country has attracted multibillion-dollar investments, budgetary support and deferred oil payments from the Arab states to overcome its prevailing economic difficulties. The Free Trade Agreement with China as part of the second phase of CPEC is also aimed to help the economy and socio-economic development. The

Strategic Engagement Plan with the European Union is also set to improve the trajectory of relations with Russia, Europe and Central Asian partners, promising to not only bring more foreign investment but improve the trading position of the country.

Pakistan is a beautiful country and has various tourist destinations, particularly the Northern sites of the country are famous in the world and greatly admired by the people in the West and elsewhere. With the security of the country vastly improving, the nation has immense potential to boost its tourism industry and yield significant revenues. To tap into this potential venture, the government introduced On Arrival Visa for 48 countries and eased the visa policies in return. Pakistan also participated on various international forums such as the UN, OIC and SCO to effectively highlight the universally growing issues of Islamophobia, Climate Change and White-Collar crime.

In more recent events, India's revocation of Articles 35 A and 370 from its constitution, effectively removing the special status of Kashmir has been deemed an undemocratic move by its neighboring-rival. As a clear violation of the United Nations Agreement since Kashmir is a disputed area and the decision was taken unilaterally without the consent of Pakistan, this move has been highly criticized all over the world as much as in Pakistan. The Foreign Ministry is playing a crucial and successful role in exposing India's condemnable move at the world stage. International leaders have been taken into confidence over this issue and a special session of the United Nations Security Council was called to discuss the Kashmir issue in over 50 years. All member countries had a clear consensus that Kashmir is not an internal issue for India and any agreement should be bilateral with Pakistan. This important move has put a lot of responsibility on the country over the disputed region.

In a nutshell, recent foreign policy of Pakistan has been very effective over the last year as the government continues to strive to create a peaceful external environment. It is expected that the international community will soon start making investments in the domestic economy and thus produce rewarding opportunities for the people of Pakistan as it continues to make progress and build a strong image on the global stage.