



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Sovereignty and Survival: The Pakistani Context**

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**ABSTRACT**

Employing a critical lens, the changing concept of sovereignty in geopolitics is analyzed and with special focus the obstacles experienced by Pakistan are compared to the global examples. Basically, the goal is to ascertain the manner in which sovereignty is asserted, kept or dilated in presence of foreign pressure, geopolitical tensions and inner instability. Sovereignty remains a defining factor in a state's ability to exercise independent decision-making, yet it is often challenged by external interventions, economic dependencies, and internal governance failures. The paper creates an understanding of leadership strategies, policy options and resistance models of different countries towards reinforcing their sovereign power, through qualitative analysis. Methodologically, it employs political discourse analysis, analysis of recent diplomatic events and frameworks of state policy to describe patterns of sovereign assertion and erosion. The results show that powerful states commonly use ideological or military means to ensure or expand sovereignty, while smaller countries or those that are economically dependent, must struggle more to exercise this right. Strategic defiance is shown by countries like Iran and China in resisting outside interference. This provides context by placing these insights in relation to Pakistan's unique geopolitical position, economic vulnerabilities and policy inconsistencies and identifies challenges and potential strategies to reinforce Pakistan's sovereignty. The conclusion then states that for Pakistan to uphold its sovereign authority, it has to follow all of it; may it be a self-reliant economy, institutional reform and foreign policy continuity based on its own national interest. This research helps to discuss how important as part of sovereignty pointing the internal governance and external pressure in the formation of state legitimacy. It shows a nuanced understanding of sovereignty as being about more than territorial control and of resilient leadership, strategic autonomy and capable diplomacy. Proposed recommendations are not part of this research.

**KEYWORDS** Sovereignty, Resilient Leadership, Foreign Pressure

**Introduction**

As a key principle of theory and practice of international relations and political science it is sovereignty as such, political rights to have sovereignty over a territory which are ultimate and the supremacy of sovereignty, being supreme power. It is the right to govern without external interference, on the absolute sure. For centuries this concept has evolved and understanding the dynamics of state behavior requires this notion. Early modern Europe conceived sovereignty from the latin *superanus* (supreme). The turning point is often cited as the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) which set the norms of territorial integrity and non-interference that define modern state sovereignty.

Sovereignty basically means that a state is only supposed to have power over its own laws enforcement and delivery of justice and other matters of state without foreign interference; besides there are different kinds of sovereignty. What we mean by legal sovereignty is the supreme law making power in a state, possessed by the body which is able unchallengeably to make laws. In democratic systems, this is typically the legislative body elected by the citizens, reflecting Jean Bodin's theory of sovereignty as absolute and indivisible.

Sovereignty is very much an interpretation that would imply that a nation cannot survive alone, that it needs both hard power (military strength, economic stability) and soft power (diplomatic influence, ideological strength) to defend its sovereignty. A sovereign state is an independent, self-reliant, self-confident and responsible member of the collection of nations that allows it to take part in that collection but that will not let itself be dragged by disparate forces not in the best interest of its people. But for a country like Pakistan sovereignty means to be free to chart its independent course, to protect its national interests and foreign policy made without bowing before foreign wishes. (Muzaffar, et. al., 2016). Sovereignty is about self-respect at the national level, it is about not trading dignity for convenience, not choosing submission over strategic resistance, and ensuring that no foreign power dictates the country's future.

## **Literature Review**

By integrating comprehensions from academic works, this literature review critically analyzes the characteristics of Pakistan's national security strategy that are perceived to be overly submissive, and examines how these traits influence Pakistan's international stature and sovereignty. Stephen D. Krasner's seminal work, "Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy," delves into the complexities of sovereignty in the modern international system. As Krasner (1999) points out, the classic Westphalian view of sovereignty is sometimes constrained by state actions and within state struggles. This perspective is especially relevant in examining Pakistan's state behavior in light of the externally and internally determined pressures that impact its sovereign choices.

Pakistan's foreign policy conduct in recent years is examined by Tajammul Altaf, in the article, *The Conduct of Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Structure, Strengths and Issues*, (2018–2020). The structural strengths and weaknesses in Pakistan's foreign policy structure are highlighted by Altaf (2021), this also points to the challenges posted by external players in challenging the state authority.

The idea of sovereignty itself has been variously discussed by experts in Pakistan, most often in terms of its attachments and alliances. In their study, Javaid and Jahangir (2016) examine how Pakistan's placement by the United States has undermined its independent decision making which shows that such kinds of association always lead to the surrender of sovereignty. In the same manner, Hussain (2017) discusses how due to pressure from outside, Pakistan strives to maintain its independence and carefully balances cooperation and independence.

## **Research Methodology**

Research Type: Qualitative

Reasoning Type: Deductive

Research Design: Exploratory

Data Collection/Sources: Mainly secondary sources: Identification of case studies where states have asserted sovereignty as examples for Pakistan, etc.

Data Analysis: Recording the adverse influence of Pakistan's submissive actions on its sovereignty

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study uses state sovereignty as the main principle of international relations, supported by classical and recent perspectives. It uses Bodin's definition of sovereignty as

the only authority in a country and Krasner's view that sovereignty involves "organized hypocrisy," to show the stress between rule-based or legal sovereignty and how states behave. The framework further uses the Westphalian model, stressing only nations can decide their own affairs and respect each other's borders, while also acknowledging the challenges of globalization, foreign influence and institutions beyond single nations. It allows us to understand how states behave when trying to exercise or share their authority within the country and with the world.

## **Results and Analysis**

### **The Importance of Sovereignty for a State's Life**

A state needs to have sovereignty in order to exist and function within the international system. It provides a solid base for political security, the law and what defines a state. Because of sovereignty, a government can enforce its laws, conduct governance and participate in diplomacy with other countries. The legitimacy is granted to a regime's right to rule and its engagements and laws are accepted both within and beyond national borders. A state's constitution enshrines its sovereignty which describes law and governance structure. It allows the society to stand as an orderly society where power for the regime is respected and followed.

In this manner sovereignty allows a state to make its own decisions based on the needs and wants of its citizens without any kind of interruption from any outside parties. This freedom is needed by countries to fix national problems with national solutions in tune with the people's culture and existing circumstances. Economic sovereignty means that a country can dictate its own monetary matters, formulate its own trade norms, can decide what to do with its resources and how to divide them under its own authority. This kind of control is necessary to accomplish economic goals related to growth, development and self-reliance, so that other countries do not control the process.

### **A State's Will Power**

The safeguarding and assertion of a country's authority, independence and sovereignty primarily rest on its political will, the willpower of its leadership and institutions to make and implement decisions that maintain national sovereignty and interests. Decisions made by political will help a nation deal with challenges, apply laws and support its sovereignty through different policies. Good governance means carrying out and keeping policies that are meant to preserve the nation's interests and national territory. A willing government encourages dialogue and change inside the country which helps to avoid foreign interference. Strength of character to track economic policies that diminish reliance on outer bodies toughens a state's control over its economic matters.

Pakistan has shown strong commitment in different areas to maintain its independence:

- **Counterterrorism Efforts:** The government has launched military operations, such as Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad, to eliminate terrorist threats and reassert control over its territories.
- **Nuclear Deterrence:** Despite international pressure, Pakistan has maintained and developed its nuclear program as a means of deterring external threats and preserving national security.

Such actions have not eliminated the obstacles that stop Pakistan from exercising its political will fully. Depending too much on foreign aid and loans may reduce a country's ability to decide its own policies. When countries work with international financial

institutions, those institutions usually set certain conditions for their policies. The army's role in political and economic domains can dent democratic institutes and civilian governance, disturbing the state's capability to exercise political will uniformly. Repeated fluctuations in administration and political turmoil can lead to erratic strategies and deteriorate the country's dimensions to assert its sovereignty efficiently (Yaseen & Muzaffar, 2018; Karamat, et. al., 2019)

To improve its political power and protect its independence, Pakistan might try to reduce its need for international aid by improving the economy and building up local industries. Pakistan should put more of its effort into strengthening democratic institutions for sound and constant policy actions. It is important that the constitution describes the functions of each group to avoid them stepping on each other's toes.

The notions of submission and resistance are crucial in international relations, predominantly relating to a country's authority. To submit means that a nation accepts the demands of another country to spare itself from trouble or financial trouble. A state opposes pressures from outside to keep its independence and to support what is most important to the country; this can be done with resistance. States are placed in situations where they must decide to comply or not to comply. Submission in itself aids in obtaining help including economic aid or safety guarantees yet in doing so may undermine long term autonomy.

Maintaining autonomy can be achieved by challenging sanctions or military actions which can also bring in further sanctions and armed clashes. What happens is that depending on national priorities as well as who is in charge and the state of the nation's economy and how the country deals with other nations dictates whether a choice is made to oppose or comply. Countries must do a cost-benefit analysis when deciding, to submit or to resist. In this examination here, one examines the pros and cons of each. But these benefits of submission are: help in trade and economy, better security through alliances and less conflict and cheaper dispute resolution.

These issues affect countries the same way, leading to declining sovereignty, citizen unhappiness over feeling like they have decreased autonomy and reliance on outside help for a long period of time. As a result, the benefits are people keeping their sovereignty and ability to choose, improving national identity and gaining a better chance to negotiate in the future. In the same way, facing resistance often leads to economic punishments causing financial strain, it may result in armed conflicts and possible losses of lives and property and it often makes a nation face isolation from other countries in terms of diplomacy and commerce. It's vital for countries to identify that while submission may bid short-ranged achievements, consistent submission can weaken sovereignty. So, states should consider each scene with caution and at times make steps back to secure their short-term interests, but stand their ground when their primary sovereignty is threatened.

The country has tried to remain independent by switching between cooperation and opposition as needed. Pakistan often turns to international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to provide economic assistance which often leads to the need to follow strict economic reforms. International pressure and sanction threats did not stop Pakistan from building nuclear weapons to protect its national interests and maintain independence. There have been times when Pakistan has refused external requests to take actions against groups inside its borders, claiming it should be allowed to handle its own security. There are occasions where Pakistan may not have supported itself strongly and analyzing the costs and benefits of those moments would be useful:

The country has repeatedly been added to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list which damages its international financial reputation. Cost-Benefit Analysis:

- **Cost:** The grey listing has deterred foreign investment and complicated international banking relations, impacting economic growth.
- **Potential Benefits of Proactive Measures:** By strengthening its financial regulatory frameworks earlier and addressing the deficiencies identified by FATF proactively, Pakistan could have avoided or shortened its time on the grey list.
- **Missed Opportunity:** Enhanced compliance with international anti-money laundering standards could have improved Pakistan's international financial standing and attracted more stable foreign investments.

The treaty agreed upon with India for sharing the Indus water has often been a place of conflict and disputes about water rights have appeared on and off. Talks involving third-party mediators have been common for Pakistan to solve these problems. Cost-Benefit Analysis:

- **Cost:** Dependency on international mediation may diminish Pakistan's direct control over outcomes, potentially compromising its ability to effectively manage its primary water resources.
- **Potential Benefits of Bilateral Negotiations:** Engaging directly with India to revisit and revise the treaty terms could lead to more sustainable and favorable water management strategies.
- **Missed Opportunity:** Pakistan may still deal with problems of water scarcity, disrupting its farming and the production of energy, as it has not forcefully negotiated these issues.

### **Types of Power needed to Assert Sovereignty**

What makes a state free to rule on its own is its possession of various forms of important power. Because of these, a state can prevent disturbance within its borders, carry out the law efficiently and negotiate with other countries on its own conditions. The key aspects a state needs to be sovereign are legislative, executive and judicial functions which are frequently called the separation of powers. Dividing government authority into legislative, executive and judicial branches, as described by the concept of separation of powers, is at the heart of the U.S. Constitution.

In international affairs, power is a multidimensional idea encompassing both tangible and intangible components that mutually define a country's capability to impact others and accomplish its goals. Concrete assets such as military forces or currency are tangible power. Intangible power embraces non-physical traits that, while not openly computable, considerably upset a country's power. A country's total authority is a mixture of both tangible and intangible components. So, economic strength (tangible) may increase a state's influence across countries (intangible), whereas popularity in arts and culture (intangible) can bring about economic partnerships (tangible). A good international strategy requires these issues to be balanced.

### **Key Findings**

In the aftermath of the Cold War, some countries in Central and Eastern Europe got help from international organizations only if they implemented neoliberal reforms set by bodies such as the European Commission. The reforms mostly involved making markets open right away and austerity steps which worsened the economy, raised inequality and caused political problems. Solidarity was missing and introducing external economic models without considering the situation in each country led to major socio-economic problems.

In 2011, NATO carried out an intervention in Libya on behalf of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. At first meant to shield the civilians, the operation later became a plan to overthrow Gaddafi. Because of the power vacuum after the intervention, civil conflict and instability occurred and this let extremist groups appear, demonstrating the harmful impact of outside intervention and the weakening of national rule.

After World War II, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were also occupied and brought under Soviet rule. They carried on with their previous legal status and did not accept Soviet annexation. Their representatives continued diplomatic activity in the West and they maintained that they were independent. This committed struggle allowed them to protect their independence and in 1991 their independence was restored.

When a country's activities deviate from its state interest, it often experiences substantial prices and antagonistic penalties. Such an imbalance may be seen through financial recessions, unstable politics and a loss of respect from international allies. The United States' contribution in the Vietnam War works as a noticeable instance of military engagement misaligned with explicit state benefits. No direct strategy in place allowed the conflict to intensify without contributing to U.S. national security interests (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018).

The nonexistence of explicit political and military objectives led to a protracted war, significant loss of life, and domestic unrest. This experience underscored the necessity for military actions to be directly connected to well-defined national interests. In response to the lessons learned from Vietnam, General Colin Powell articulated a doctrine emphasizing that military force should only be used when it aligns with vital national interests and with clear objectives.

A true leader's ideology serves as the compass guiding their decisions, policies, and interactions on both domestic and international stages. This deeply held set of beliefs and values shapes their vision for their nation and influences their leadership style. Leaders driven by a clear ideology often exhibit a consistent and unwavering approach to governance. Their policies and actions are reflections of their foundational beliefs, which provide a framework for decision-making and strategic planning. This commitment to a particular belief can be noticed in a variety of choices:

- Leaders based on ideologies design policies that are in line with their core values. For example, a leader who cares strongly about the environment might focus on green development and ensure tough environmental rules are in place.
- Uniting the Population: To foster unity such leaders highlight cultural, historical or religious features that fit their beliefs. They try to unite people under one identity to build stronger ties among the population and the state.
- Ideology in essence can structure how leaders approach relations to countries. Such countries might join coalitions with other like-minded or different belief countries that affects the way they make their foreign policy and their diplomacy.

Mao's government was based on his Marxist-Leninist belief which made him become the establishing father of the People's Republic of China. Mao devoted himself to communism and so he leaped forward with the Great Leap Forward and leapt back with the Cultural Revolution in order to make communist China. China's political landscape was heavily influenced by Mao's ideology-driven governance (Muzaffar & Khan, 2021).

Iran would not, however, be the Iran we recognize today, had it not been for its dedicated loyalty to its ideological values, even in the face of substantial trials and murder of key leaders, to its foundational views. In many ways Iran has succeeded in maintaining its beliefs in the face of outside forces and losses. On 3rd of January 2020, Iran's top

general, Major General Qasem Soleimani, was killed by U.S. drone strike near the Baghdad International Airport, a key character in Iran's army and political strategy. Iran's powerful Quds Force, an elite unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), grew under the influence of Soleimani, who helped spread Iran's influence in the Middle East. His murder was a noteworthy setback to Iran's leadership and its regional desires.

In late 2023, law enforcement in the U.S. stopped a plot to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York City. The U.S. Department of Justice accused Vikash Yadav, a past officer of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), with organizing the plan. Yadav allegedly recruited Nikhil Gupta to carry out the assassination; Gupta was arrested in Prague, extradited to the U.S., and pleaded not guilty. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) played a key part in disrupting the attack. DEA Administrator Anne Milgram stated, "DEA foiled this assassination attempt last year and has continued to trace this case back to an employee of the Indian government whom we charge was an orchestrator of this intricate murder-for-hire scheme."

Because the U.S. and India had long been strong and friendly partners, this incident caused the U.S. to take a firm stand for its sovereignty. The U.S. government's activities establish that it highlights the implementation of its laws and the safety of people within its area, even if it means holding an ally answerable. Within this approach, having national sovereignty and the rule of law as top priorities is emphasized. The U.S. makes it clear it will not allow any foreign activity that harms its sovereignty, no matter the nature of its relationships with the involved countries. America's actions involving the Indian government employee who allegedly plotted an assassination stand as an example of their strong dedication to their own country's sovereignty. The U.S. reconfirms that its first priority is the safety of its residents and its borders, regardless of diplomacy. The Trudeau government has accused India of playing a part in the June 2023 murder in British Columbia of another Sikh separatist leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, an accusation that has contributed to further diplomatic heat.

In this event, India has denied responsibility in both cases and referred to the charges as 'absurd and motivated.' The Biden administration pressed India for swift accountability in response to a foiled U.S. plot. An Indian investigative panel did acknowledge legal action should be taken against an unnamed individual, though. Allies or not, the United States has made it clear that the U.S. response to the foiled assassination plot against Sikh separatist leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun is that national sovereignty is sacrosanct. In this case, it shows that the U.S. believes that even with existing diplomatic relations any foreign interference inside its borders is unacceptable. But it escalated diplomatic strains between the U.S. and India which followed Canada's accusations that Indian intelligence was behind the June 2023 killing in British Columbia of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the Sikh separatist leader.

## **Conclusion**

Despite tests involved by globalization, foreign forces and inner segregations, sovereignty is a fundament of a country's presence and strength. Strained international relationships with the rest of the world, dependence on others and domestic political issues, combined, have made it difficult from the beginning for Pakistan to preserve independence. The chapter put forward that in order to protect the sovereignty of Pakistan these threats must be dealt with carefully. Pakistan can become more impregnable to both external and internal pressures playing on its nerves by innocuous devices by strengthening its financial independence, firming its political institutes and steering for a coherent foreign policy in line to the national interest. This is acting in the best interest of Pakistan, so Pakistan can play a role in world affairs, can protect the sovereignty of their country and the well being of Pakistanis.





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