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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Transitioning Pakistan's Hard Power Image: A Strategic Exploration of Shifting Paradigms towards Soft Power Diplomacy

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to examine the hard power perception of Pakistan and explore strategies for transforming it into a soft power image. The global community cannot ignore the developments in Pakistan due to its strategic location, large population, strong military, and nuclear weapons. Military leadership has significant share in the policy making. Qualitative approaches are employed in this research. Pakistan's "hard power" image has produced diplomatic challenges worldwide. It has a bad reputation among civilized nations due to human rights abuses, extremism, terrorism, and military interference in civil matters. Today's quick communication affects people worldwide through the internet and other ways. Narratives are constructed through the employment of soft power instruments. Strengthening of civil governments, cultural & educational exchange programs, electronic media, improvements of human rights, regional connectivity, trade, and public diplomacy, are some of the recommendations for the improvement of the image of Pakistan.

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**KEYWORDS** Hard Power, Image, Pakistan, Soft Power

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### Introduction

Pakistan is an important country in terms of unexplored resources, vibrant youth, and advanced military equipment but for some years it has lost its significance in international forums due to its unstable political system, militancy, poor economy, and worst law & Order situation. It is also suffering diplomatic isolation in international forums. The global community cannot afford to overlook the developments in Pakistan due to its strategic geographical position, significant population size, robust military capabilities, and possession of nuclear weapons. Moreover, it functions as a key gateway to both Central Asia and East Asia.

Pakistani military takes most of the foreign policy, economy, and internal security decisions in the name of national security. Whenever a representative of an important country visits Pakistan, he must meet the military leadership, because without the support of the military, the civilian government cannot take important decisions, and international powers also don't trust civilians. Many businesses are run by military institutes regarding production and services. This does not show the soft image of Pakistan because such a powerful institution cannot become competitive in the market. Whenever there is a crisis or opportunity, the local as well as foreign investor demands guarantees from military leaders regarding business security and policies. Besides this India, a large country in population, economics, resources, and area, influences Pakistan.

A powerful neighbor also increases insecurity for Pakistan and its military. It is the destination for investors from all over the world since it is a land of opportunity and investment. In addition to war conflicts, Pakistan's traditional opponent always lobbies against it through international forums, media, diplomatic forums, and political organizations.

Soft power can be a useful medium to influence other countries to brand Pakistan's image as a land of opportunities. The costs associated with soft power instruments are significantly lower in comparison to those of hard power instruments. Today the great powers of the world especially the USA and the UK influence other nations through their norms, political institutions, international organizations, public diplomacy, and foreign aid. They do not need to penetrate through military forces; they get their goals through soft power institutes. A nation exerts its influence on other countries through several means, including its political institutions, cultural traditions, humanitarian assistance, and digital platforms.

The military institution wields significant influence in the realm of Pakistani politics and governance, but the exertion of soft power is contingent upon civilian leadership because they lack diplomatic abilities. Pakistan's civilian leadership has little incentive to provide a positive picture of their country. Pakistan has implemented many measures to counter international propaganda and enhance its positive image through international organizations, arts, culture, music, education, and the building of democratic systems. Tourism, Religious tourism, and special economic zones are the major initiatives of civilian governments.

### **Literature Review**

The security-centric policy should be changed into a nation's prosperity and economic growth which can be achieved through soft power policy i.e. public diplomacy, tourism, and regional peace initiatives, etc. (Syed, Gul, Akbar, 2020). Pakistan's image abroad is not good due to corruption in the public departments and the negligence of the government. Pakistani government branded the country through different lobbies and campaigns abroad but could not portray the right image, it may be due to having not the right direction or consistency in policies (Fan & Shahani, 2014). Ambassador Khalid Mahmood says, it is not easy to make a good image of Pakistan overnight, it is time taking. Soft power assets should be promoted for the well-being of the nation and the prosperity of Pakistan. There should be positive use of soft power not for propaganda (Mustafa, Mumtaz, Salik, 2016). Pakistan should not rely on hard power only; it has to rebrand itself as a land of opportunities through its culture, tourism, cuisines literary festivals, cinema, and media (Kayani & Rehman, 2022). Beelam Ramzan writes in an article that many countries including China, the USA, and India use their soft power potential through different sources to make their image better. The image of Pakistan is declining due to terrorism and a poor political system. Sustained policies can encourage private and public sectors to promote the good image of Pakistan (Ramzan, 2023).

### **Material and Methods**

This study uses qualitative methodologies. Secondary sources such as scholarly publications, books, journals, newspapers, policy papers, expert comments, and government reports might provide relevant information. Case studies can analyze specific soft power initiatives. To understand the objectives, the research can be exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory.

## Soft Power

Joseph Nye was the first to recognize the existence of soft power, but it had previously gone unnoticed or been underappreciated. The concept of power has been characterized as encompassing military aggression, the possession of a formidable army, and the deployment of lethal weapons. However, it is important to acknowledge that relying solely on military means is not a universally applicable solution to all conflicts (Gray, 2011). In order to effectively accomplish the desired outcomes, the utilization of soft power is essential in conjunction with hard power. This is exemplified by the Soviet Union's defeat in Afghanistan and the United States' loss in the Vietnam War. In both instances, the absence of public or international community backing for the aggressors, despite their possession of considerable hard power resources, played a significant role in their failures. According to Joseph Nye, the soft power of a state is derived from various sources, including its cultural appeal that attracts others, the political systems and ideals it upholds domestically and internationally, and its relationships with other nations. These tools function best when they are morally sound and legitimate (Raimzhanova, 2015).

According to Nye, the US is better at soft power since it has the iPad, iPhone, Boeing, Ford, Amazon, MTV, Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, Intel, etc. Hollywood is the biggest film industry which shapes viewers' opinion on the US's Cold War and 9/11 posture in the US and abroad (Nye, 2004). McDonald's has locations worldwide. These private American enterprises project a soft image abroad. Most nations admire the American lifestyle portrayed by these products. Nye claims in "The Paradox of American Power" that any nation may rule others if it has dominating cultures and ideas that are close to global traditions and promote liberalism, pluralism, and institutional autonomy (Nye, 1990). It also has numerous means to communicate and is well-known for how ideas are framed, issues are produced, to gain confidence, and how it performs in its hometown and globally.

## Elements of Soft Power

The concept of "soft power" is new, so it is difficult to define its components properly. Academics disagree on both its precise meaning and its application. The majority of academics believe that soft power includes things like diplomacy, cultural interaction, foreign aid, the entertainment industry, NGOs, etc. These all are complex elements that require comprehension. Sometimes it takes too long to accomplish the objectives. As each country has unique tastes, food cultures, geographic characteristics, political ideals, and priorities, soft power cannot be fully realized through these institutions. For instance, foreign cultures do not impress the Chinese. They allow only a small amount of foreign influence.

On the other hand, soft power has undesirable goals even while it is tied to moral or idealistic objectives. To put it simply, soft power is a strategy for subtly influencing culture and diplomacy for either bad or positive intentions. Most soft power is intangible and draws people to it because of its allure (Nye, 2021). According to Nye, soft power includes resources like ideology, culture, and universal moral principles. He then goes on to discuss the three elements of soft power: culture (the places that draw people in), political standards (applied both at home and abroad), and foreign policy (which should be viewed as morally and legally sound). The distinction between soft power and hard power is made clear by this definition.

## **Examining Pakistan's Global Image through History**

Few bloodless movements gained new states in history. Pakistan is one of them which emerged from a peaceful struggle within the laws of that time. Independence leaders were well-educated and charismatic to influence the colonial rulers. Their political party was the 'All India Muslim League'. This party's initial manifesto was to work with the British to improve the Muslim community and take their due share in governance, but they later realized that after British rulers left, their interests in the one independent state would be threatened. To get Muslims a separate nation, they changed their manifesto. They demanded Muslim interests. Their ambitions for an independent homeland were eventually met. Many political leaders were influenced by this movement, including Nelson Mandela, the renowned South African leader, who was motivated by the Pakistan movement, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah (the nation's father). He was an admirer of Muhammad Ali Jinnah because of his nonviolent, unarmed political fight (Hamdani, 2013).

Muslim political leaders engaged in a protracted, nonviolent political conflict that culminated in the creation of Pakistan in 1947. The independence movement's leaders uphold strong political and moral principles. It was not just the British Crown but also their opponents who recognized their contributions to politics and society. After just one year of independence, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the country's founder, passed away. Liaquat Ali Khan, the inaugural Prime Minister of the newly formed nation and the right-hand man of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, headed that pivotal struggle. Under his direction, Pakistan developed a foreign policy based on the values of equality, dignity, respect for sovereignty, good relations with the USSR and the rest of the world, good relations with neighbouring nations, peaceful resolution of disputes, and priority relations with Muslim nations. Because of these ideas, Pakistan was able to accomplish her goals in the first four years. Pakistan's independence movement served as an inspiration for other countries engaged in freedom struggles. Pakistan established diplomatic ties with every nation and established consulates in the main ones. Under PM Liaquat Ali Khan's direction, new institutions and the reorganization of public ministries were started. With few resources and in a relatively short period, the government of a recently formed nation had positive results. The foundation of Pakistan is strengthened by the rapid formation of several new institutes. Liaquat Ali Khan supported a cease-fire agreement as a means of resolving the Kashmir dispute amicably at the negotiation table. Regretfully, he was killed in 1951 during a public gathering in Rawalpindi (Sultana, 2020). After the death of the popular leader, the military establishment found an opportunity to interfere in political matters, later they imposed martial law in 1958 and sabotaged the political developments.

Gen. Ayub Khan launched an operation in Kashmir in 1965, starting the conflict between India and Pakistan, which the world saw as Pakistani aggression. It offered Pakistan nothing but defamed it as an aggressor. Pakistan had to stop the war with the heavy losses. The unrest in East Pakistan was caused by political and social inequality. The Pakistani military Chief suppressed popular aspirations and civil turmoil through military force, despite political discussion. Other non-state entities used this operation to challenge the state and weaken Pakistani solidarity. In this operation, the Indian army struck East Pakistan to save Bengalis. Thus Pakistan lost its Eastern wing during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Military regime. India claimed that the Pakistani Army was targeting civilians and defenseless people to grab their voices in East Pakistan (Mustafa & Nawaz, 2014). The third Zia-Ul-Haq's martial law was imposed in 1977. Pakistan sponsored Afghan Jihad as a US ally against the Soviets. Pakistan was the US ally, but all respectable scholars and

intellectuals warned Pakistan that radical Islamists would discredit and undermine Pakistan's image. The proxies of Iran and Saudia came in the form of Shia Sunni fundamentalism in the 1980s.

Civilian rule resumed in 1988 after Gen. Zia Ul Haq died in an aviation crash. On corruption and incompetence claims, Benazir Bhutto and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's governments collapsed. Benazir accused military agencies of overthrowing her administration. Political and military leaders in Pakistan and throughout the world were defamed by civilian government dismissals. The 1999 Kargil War greatly tarnished Pakistan and its military establishment. This overthrew Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's civilian government. With Gen. Pervez Musharraf's illegal rule, the new century began. He reigned unconstitutionally with military and judicial support. He admitted to transferring Pakistani citizens to NATO and the USA unlawfully.

The military's interference in political issues, particularly in diplomatic missions, harms Pakistan's cause. History has repeated itself numerous times, yet the military elite believe they are well qualified to understand Pakistan's interests. For instance, the Kargil War derailed the entire process following the Lahore Declaration (the Indian PM visited Pakistan to resolve disputes through diplomacy). The Indian administration accused Pakistan of stabbing them in the back during the Kargil conflict (Sharif, 2011). This episode not only damaged Pakistan's reputation throughout the world but also damaged the ability of civilian elected administrations to negotiate crucial issues with other states.

### **Image of Pakistan as a Hard Power**

Soon after gaining independence, Pakistan was perceived as a hard power. India, a powerful and resourceful country with significant military capabilities, was the cause of the problem. Pakistan has to concentrate on developing its military to defend itself against such a powerful adversary. The Pakistani military establishment is strengthened by the sizeable army and its widespread infrastructure. After developing nuclear weapons, the conventionally large army was no longer required, but its size could not be lowered because it gave the military leadership the ability to influence political authority.

### **9/11 Incident**

After 9/11, Gen. Musharraf chose war against terrorism as a US ally. The military leadership supported the US and NATO against the Afghan Taliban without understanding the consequences. Weak institutions, poor border management, law & order issues, a corrupt judicial system, the police and army incompetence allowed terrorists, enemies, and foreign operatives to attack Pakistan. Too many terrorist suicide assaults have killed over 50,000 people and cost the economy 70 billion US dollars (Yamin, 2016). The US and the government of Afghanistan blamed Pakistan for supporting the Taliban. India began to characterize Pakistan as a nation that supports terrorism as a result of its anti-terrorism policies. India was able to claim that Pakistan was responsible for multiple terrorist strikes in Kashmir and India. The world deemed Kashmiri freedom fighters as terrorists. After 9/11, the US, the UK, and others supported the Indian stance on Kashmir and terrorism. The US-led "Abbottabad Operation" that killed Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden on May 2, 2011, tarnished Pakistan's reputation and allowed the world to conclude that Pakistan supports Al-Qaeda and the Taliban (Shah, Khattak, & Attiq, 2016).

## **Hard Power in Foreign Policy**

Pakistan has been monitored by FATF (Financial Action Task Force) for supporting terrorist groups. Pakistan was on the gray list for years; as a result of it, foreign investors didn't come. It reduced the State Bank of Pakistan's reserves. Pakistan is struggling economically and lacks resources and foreign reserves. Indian Prime Minister publicly admitted to isolating Pakistan. In a public conference, Narendra Modi stated, "The government of India (with the lobbies) compelled Islamabad to beg like beggars from across the world" (The Economic Times, 2019).

The military controlled directly for 35 years and indirectly via civilian authorities for others. The Army is crucial to diplomatic ties, and an elected Prime Minister cannot make foreign policy or military business decisions without the Chief of the Army Staff's assistance. PTI's government recently remained neutral in the Russia-Ukraine confrontation. The Prime Minister publicly stated an official strategy, but the Army Chief criticized Russian aggression and accepted the US narrative (Gul, 2022). The military officer violated the constitution and denied elected government policies in front of the world. This clear case reveals how much the military influences Pakistan's foreign policy. The Bajwa Doctrine was recently articulated by General Bajwa of the Pakistani army. He made decisions regarding how to interact with China, India, the USA, Russia, and Afghanistan as well as other neighbors. Serious claims have also been made against this military veteran that he was complicit in the overthrow of the government of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (The Express Tribune, 2023).

In an interview, the Prime Minister of India questioned: Who is Pakistan's legitimate ruler or leader? Should I approach Pakistan's Army, ISI, or the democratically elected government? Pakistan should address this power issue first (Modi, 2022).

## **Sources of Soft Power for Pakistan**

### **Cultural heritage**

Pakistan encompasses a region that is exceptionally affluent and possesses deep historical connections with past civilizations. In ancient Arabic texts, this region was referred to as 'Sindh' and eventually came to be known as the 'Indus' in English. The name "Sindh" is derived from the presence of the Sindh River and its five main tributaries: Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas. The region is watered by the Indus River system, which is exceptionally productive and abundant in culture. The Indus region exhibits a unique cultural identity that sets it apart from India's Ganga-Jamuni civilization. The Indus region, which has a predominantly Muslim population, has connections with Turkiya and countries in Central Asia. Muslims have resided in this region for over a millennium. The cultures of the Central Asian nations have an impact on them. For instance, the architecture of the tombs in the mosques and the Fiqh of "Hanafi" originated in these Indus Valley regions came from Central Asia.

The Indus and Gandhara civilizations are around 5000 and 3000 years old, respectively. These civilizations are some of the oldest in the world. The Indus and Egyptian civilizations share numerous similarities in their characteristics. A new era of friendship and connections with Egypt can be established by re-establishing these ancient links. The temples, dwellings, architecture, and artifacts of Gandhara art are wonders of the earth. Tourists are drawn to handicrafts and idols of all sizes due to their beauty and charms. Taxila, a city located in the Punjab region, is adorned with significant emblems of the illustrious Gandhara culture. The images of Buddha are artistically

crafted on walls, mountains, and stones, each of which is a remarkable work of art. This area of Pakistan is unique in the globe as it is the sole site that houses these sacred Buddhist temples (Rajput, 2018). Besides this Harappa, Taxila, Mohenjo-Daro, Badshahi Mosque, Noor Mahal, Shahi Qila, and G.T Road are among the culturally significant sites in Pakistan. The World Heritage List of UNESCO features six of its cultural sites (UNESCO, n.d.).

### **Art and Festivals**

Pakistan has always had vibrant art scenes. Calligraphy and painting are two of its well-known art forms. Sadequain and Abdur Rehman Chughtai continued to be well-known performers who were recognized for their abilities both locally and internationally. Arts education is provided at Mayo School (later National College of Arts) in Lahore. By redefining local art or fusing it with modern art, one might attract international students.

Pakistan didn't employ artists or the arts as a means of soft power. The relevance of art and the need for artists to convey its delicate image are urgently needed. One domain that transcends national boundaries is art. It could become an attraction for musicians from South Asian countries to perform at Pakistani institutions. There should be given support to arts institutes and universities for artists and students from neighboring countries to participate in collaborative projects, international exhibitions, prize ceremonies, and other events. We can create a billion-dollar export economy by promoting art because it is constantly employed in graphic design, commercials, the fashion industry, and other fields. The art must simply be treated like an industry, with policies that are taken seriously and examined like any other sector.

### **Literary and Cultural Festivals**

Pakistan Literature Festival, Faiz Festival, International Urdu Conference, Allama Iqbal Festival, Aasma Jahangir Conference, etc. host local and foreign speakers. Government and private firms finance these conferences because they promote Pakistan's soft image. It demonstrates how deeply this nation values literature, the arts, and music.

Unfortunately, government entities pressure some organizers not to discuss sensitive subjects, which create critical thinking. Most people learned life lessons from scholars at these conferences. Politicians, artists, performers, writers, journalists, and media professionals from around the world are invited to speak (Mirza, 2023). Intellectuals offer their views on society at these events. As intellectuals are society's assets, governments and leaders should support these programs because nations are known by their scholars and intellectuals.

### **Film and Entertainment**

People find amusement in dramas and movies. Some film industries, like Hollywood and Bollywood, have enormous audiences that reach beyond their national borders. The film business in Pakistan (the Lahore studios, or Lollywood) is likewise very old, having existed before the country's founding (Ali & Zulfiqar, 2020). Actors from Pakistan have received recognition on a global scale for their outstanding performances. Although Pakistani television channels are not available on Indian TV cables, the country's dramas can be seen on YouTube in India and other countries, contributing to the country's expanding entertainment industry.

The entertainment industry is full of talented people, but there are extremely few audiences. Although there are talented actors, directors, and screenplays available, the film industry is hindered by outmoded studios and a lack of funding. The government of our neighbor is encouraging its film industry, which represents India's aspirations and soft image overseas. Entertainment and movies are not regarded as industries here. Pakistan's socio-religious standards prevent most members of society from appreciating art and artists, whereas in India, Pakistan's artists' creations are valued. Excessive Censor Board intervention bans several films. International recognition is granted to numerous actors, including Saima, Reema, Nargis, Saba Qamar, Mahira Khan, Sajal Ali, Babra Sharif, Javed Sheikh, etc. There is a large global following of Hindi and Urdu-speaking singers such as Hadiqa Kiani, Abrar Ul Haq, Ali Zafar, Atif Aslam Naseebo Lal, and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, etc. These performers portray Pakistan's soft image to the outside world by showcasing its aesthetics, music, and other aspects of its culture.

The movie serves as a vehicle for the dissemination of ideas, as Hollywood produced numerous films about the 9/11 attacks to persuade non-American viewers to support the US in the war on terror. Additionally, propaganda films portraying Pakistan as a terrorist organization and a failing state are produced by Indian cinema. Pakistan might respond to this campaign by recognizing the film industry and providing tax assistance to the film sector. It can produce films that will appeal to a global audience through the cinema. Recently, Turkiya has tried to promote its culture through dramas; some of these have been internationally recognized as "Dirilis Ertugrul."

Government cultural departments can provide funding for the creation of historical, cultural, and traditional dramas set in Pakistan and assist in getting them broadcast on PTV World and other internet streaming services like Netflix, etc. In this way, the narrative that movies create makes it easy to convey to those who avoid politics and the media. The Pakistani film industry can project a positive picture of its society abroad by using themes such as stories of intelligence activities & military operations, tourism destinations, culture & customs, progressive ideas, and social & political narratives that appeal to international audiences.

### **Sufi Music**

Sufi music is a specialty of the subcontinent; Pakistan is home to all of the well-known Sufi musicians and vocalists. Prominent vocalists of Sufi music include Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Ghulam Farid Sabri, Abida Parveen, Aziz Mian, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Amjad Sabri, and Pathanay Khan. In every part of the world where Punjabi and Urdu are spoken, they have enormous fan bases. With his musical compositions and performances, Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (Late) gained a devoted following from countries that are unaware of Urdu and Punjabi. He presented classical music with contemporary trends and introduced new Qawwali trends. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan gave Qawwali newfound international recognition. Even now, many years after his passing, both young and old enjoy listening to his songs. These performers serve as Pakistan's ambassadors and do so without receiving funding from the government. Regrettably, Pakistani society does not have a positive perception of art or artists. The government needs to support the arts and give artists the resources they need to present a positive image of Pakistan to the world because the Artists portray a soft picture of their nation.

### **Digital Communication Ecosystem: News Media**

Any nation's soft power assets should prioritize its media. Global broadcasters include Voice of America, CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, and TRT. These media outlets had an



impact on global politics. Through documentaries, news, and stories, these channels promote the social and political ideals of their home states and entice other countries to do the same.

Independent media can portray Pakistan's soft image by showcasing its beautiful Northern Areas, infrastructure, positive criticism, respecting victims' emotions, presenting society's real problems, and highlighting growth opportunities. This positive image will be noticed by diplomats and foreigners. They will witness Pakistan's bright future. Media organizations promoting Pakistani tourism and possibilities can receive government support. Media houses with a soft image and constructive real-issue coverage should receive government subsidies and ads. In 2013, PTV World re-launched as English News Channel to bring Pakistani news abroad. However, this channel has not gained international popularity. Its traditional management and internal politics involvement are the reasons. PTV World can attract worldwide viewers by focusing on the topics of regional and international issues by portraying the positive role of Pakistan.

### **Social Media or Cyberspace**

Social media and OTTs are pushing news and entertainment online. Due to globalization, every cell phone in every country has the same channel or app. Social media dispels narratives in seconds. Pakistani enterprises also created OTT platforms like Tamasha and SHOQ. Google Play's most downloaded Pakistani app is Tamasha. For famous PTV dramas, Pakistan Television developed PTVFLIX as an OTT portal. Pakistani dramas and comedies are popular in the region. Thus soft power can be deployed with Pakistani OTT content.

### **Languages: The Unifying Power across Borders**

Pakistan has many ethnic groups with various traditions and languages, nearly 601 languages are spoken. Some languages, like English, Urdu, Pashto, Punjabi, Persian, etc., are spoken abroad. The international and official language of Pakistan is English. Urdu is spoken and understood throughout South Asia. Punjabi is spoken in India, Pakistan, Canada, etc. Most Afghan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa people speak Pashto. Iran and Balochistan both have Persian speakers. The government should support literature, art, movies, and cinema in these languages to create a shared culture and civilization, thus, Pakistan's soft image can be enhanced.

### **Sports Diplomacy**

Soft power can be promoted through sports activities. There will be less likelihood of war if there are games amongst the neighbors or adversaries. Pakistan promotes sports with few resources. Cricket fans from all around the world love Inzimam Ul Haq, Imran Khan, Shoaib Akhtar, and Wasim Akram. These are soft images of Pakistan. In addition, the Punjab-born game of "International Kabbadi Matches" was held in Lahore recently. Kabbadi gained international recognition and Pakistan can use it to convey its soft image.

### **Human Rights**

Human Rights, minority rights, and women's rights issues always remained weak points for Pakistan to be embarrassed in the world. This problem harms Pakistan's image abroad. India and other countries also target Pakistan's reputation by discussing these issues on diplomatic fronts. It is the need of the hour to take these issues seriously to stand among the civilized nations that respect human values.

## **Women Empowerment**

A well-educated mother will start positive changes at home to create the perfect society. Women will develop and excel on national and international stages if they are given equal opportunities. Fatima Jinnah, Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, Benazir Bhutto, Madam Noor Jahan, Runa Laila, and Arfa Karim were among the well-known examples of Pakistan's soft-image icons. These women become well-known in their fields of politics, information technology, leadership, diplomacy, democracy, institutional reforms, and music. The recent Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yosafzai demonstrates the desire of Pakistani girls to further their education. In addition to artists and scholars, other females as entrepreneurs, legislators, lawyers, businesswomen, and scholars are also contributing positively to Pakistan's soft power image. It will be beneficial for Pakistan's soft image to have these intelligent women in prominent positions both domestically and overseas, and it will also inspire young women to strive hard for a bright future.

## **Enforcement of Law and Order**

Since Pakistan is a garrison state, the level of law and order is not good. The terrorists and dishonest political parties continued to terrorize Karachi, the country's economic center. Pakistan can attain its objectives of fostering a positive image by tackling this security issue. A positive public image of Pakistan's security status will result from increased protection for the populace. People will feel comfortable and safe, and it will project a positive image internationally. Visitors and investors from other countries will view Pakistan as a secure destination. Another major danger to Pakistan's security and stability is the country's high crime rate. The accused managed to avoid punishment because of an insufficient investigation mechanism and inadequate civil intelligence. The world will view Pakistan as a safe country as a result of changing this attitude.

## **Education as Diplomacy**

Pakistan might gain soft power from international-standard education. Scholars and intellectuals from Pakistan attend top Western universities. Effective management and integration of educational institutions with current technology offer opportunities for both international and local students to pursue higher education in Pakistan. Students from developing nations can study in Pakistani colleges because English is the language of instruction. Pakistani universities and Madrassas excelled for years, Karachi, Peshawar, and Punjab universities had large African, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian student bodies in the past. Now International Islamic University Islamabad has many overseas students due to the facilities and scholarships for foreign students.

Additionally, Pakistani Madrassas are the center of Hanafi Islamic teaching worldwide. Most Muslims follow the Hanafi School of Islamic Fiqh, the oldest and most popular (Islamic Research Team, 2017). These Madrassas provide the best religious education while meeting modern needs. Jamia Binoria Aalamia, Jamia Tur Rasheed, Jamia Darul Uloom in Karachi, and Jamia Ashrafia Lahore offer international-standard Islamic education with modern facilities. Most Taliban leaders in Afghanistan were educated and lived at Pakistani Madrassas. They discuss the issues they are having with their Pakistani teachers.

Pakistan also offers education opportunities through various scholarship programs. The Allama Iqbal Scholarship for Afghan and Sri Lankan students is the most

famous. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan awards 1,000 scholarships to Sri Lankans. Further, 1500 Afghan students get scholarships. This initiative seeks to strengthen regional cultural and educational linkages.

### **International Support for Institution Development**

Pakistan may help the nations establish their institutions, just as it did in the past. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) supplied technical and administrative help to the airline of the United Arab Emirates in 1985 (Duncan, 2023). In addition, PIA helped numerous other nations establish their aviation infrastructure. The military of Pakistan helped numerous Arab and other nations develop their armed forces. Pilots from Pakistan instructed Arab cadets and helped to construct their air force infrastructure.

The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), is well-known around the world for its work with biometrics, human identity databases, and verifications. Additionally, it is the first institution in the world to offer an online biometrics service. Regarding services, delivery, and efficiency, this Pakistani institution enjoys international recognition. Many nations, including Sudan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Fiji, and Somalia, received assistance from NADRA in developing national databases of citizens, passports, identity cards, driving licenses, and other documents. It collaborated on the "Readmission Management System" with the European Union as well (NADRA, 2023). In addition to providing foreign exchange reserves, this assistance helps Pakistan project a positive international image. NADRA is a soft power tool for Pakistan that helps to shape its image abroad. Several other institutes of Pakistan can also earn a good name for Pakistan.

### **Economy, Trade& Ease of Doing Business**

The branding of a country is also necessary in the age of media and quick communication. Nation branding increases international investment, generates jobs, expands businesses, boosts living standards, and fosters pride in one's country. In the end, it improves the nation's image. The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan helps Pakistani exporters exhibit their goods and services abroad as part of the Pakistani government's branding efforts. To facilitate business, foreign traders, investors, industrial displays, and cultural activities, the federal government built "Expo Centres" in Karachi and Lahore. These Expo Centres have modern Exhibition Halls, Convention Halls, Open Event areas, and Conference Rooms. Trade and economic liberalization allows Pakistani exporters and entrepreneurs to sell their goods and ideas abroad. Commerce not only generates revenue but also improves the reputation of the nation where the product was produced. Pakistan must design a business-friendly structure to attract investment. To increase investment and import technology from industrialized nations, copyright laws should be enforced strictly.

### **CPEC and Regional Connectivity**

Pakistan signed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to enhance transportation, infrastructure, communication, energy, and research projects in response to its expanding population and limited resources. Additionally, Pakistan wants to build railways and motorways from Gawadar Port to Central Asian countries. Despite having a lengthy border with Iran, there is relatively little in the way of trade, tourism, and interpersonal interactions. Pakistan can export its goods at a reduced cost to Europe by traveling through Iran and Turkey. The collection of toll taxes and other revenues from

the ports, this project will strengthen Pakistan's economy. Through regional connectivity and trade, Pakistan can become a junction between the East and the West.

### **Religious and Cultural Tourism**

Pakistan has the potential to attract followers of various religions. It is home to numerous Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu holy sites. There are Buddhist and Hindu temples dating back thousands of years. Restoring and expanding the infrastructure for these temples can help Pakistan gain a soft image internationally and defuse internal tensions. Besides this, there are a lot of beautiful deserts, mountain peaks, green areas, and seashores in Pakistan. The tourist sites in the Northern areas are among the most beautiful tourist sites in the world. Low-cost tour expenditures can attract tourists from all around the globe to see the beautiful image of Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

Pakistan is considered a hard country that lacks a strong commitment to discussion and cooperation with its neighboring countries. The military establishment has the authority to make all significant decisions for the country and nation, extending beyond the limitations of its garrisons. The popular or elected leadership is kept far from making significant policy decisions. The status of Pakistan as a security state can be eliminated, as it creates insecurity among businessmen and diplomats regarding the country's policies. It is time to rebrand the state as a welfare and democratic one, free from institutional blackmail and safe for investors and their funds. Pakistan possesses significant potential to leverage soft power as a means to exert influence at both regional and global levels. A few of the resources are intellectual property rights, cyberspace, film and entertainment, foreign aid and development, philanthropy, cultural heritage, art, media, languages, Sufi music, folk music, education, tourism, women's empowerment, trade, enforcement of law & order, science and technology, religious tourism and so on. The move of Pakistan from hard power to soft power can increase its importance in the region as well as the politics of international institutions.

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