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## **Interplay of Language, Power and Political Discourses in Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Case Study of Speech Diplomacy of Imran Khan**

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### **Abstract**

The practice of populist narratives in foreign policy has remained a substantial feature of Pakistani politics as political and state elite are used to employing such political discourses to attract masses for political and electoral advantages. However, these political discourses originating from populist narratives are not just confined to domestic politics but developed consequences for foreign policy choices of Pakistan. The former Pakistani cricket player and politician; Imran Khan is known for his charm and straightforward talk around the globe. He has always remained the centre of attention not only in Pakistani media but got tremendous coverage on international level. Many of his forthright statements as Prime Minister of Pakistan provoked widespread reactions, affecting Pakistan's relation with certain countries, and indicated the altered directions of Pakistan's foreign policy while bringing hardships for Pakistan as well as new opportunities. The case study examines the selected speeches of former prime minister of Pakistan; Imran Khan (August 2018-April 2022) at international forums to assess that how populist narratives have been pronounced in his speeches at international forums through argumentation discourse. This paper primarily focuses on the relationship of public oratory of Imran Khan and assertion of diplomatic narratives of Pakistan. The underlying study is qualitative in nature and primarily critical discourse analysis has been incorporated to extract the meaning, intention and direction of Imran Khan's selected speeches, structure and strategy of talk within the political and strategic context of Pakistan's foreign policy and its resultant outcomes.

**Key Words:** Geography, Geopolitics, Demography, Ideological factors, Security threats.

## Introduction

Foreign policy making is a multifaceted process in any state as it involves various institutions and individuals as well as formal and informal mechanisms to translate national interests of a country into actions. Individual role source is one of the key determinants of foreign policy making process especially more asserted in those states where either charismatic politics exists or cult of personality is much influential to shape the voting preferences of electorates. The links between domestic political dynamics of a state and its foreign policy rhetoric become more apparent when later is used to secure legitimacy and popular support in internal politics of that country. Pakistan's foreign policy choices and constraints are primarily characterized by its problematic relationship with politically unsteady Afghanistan on its western border and a persistent traditional rivalry with comparatively bigger and powerful India on its Eastern periphery. More twist is added to Pakistan's paradoxical foreign policy approach with its love and hate relationship with United States where long term cooperation has remained limited and infrequent due to lack of convergence of interests and a shared worldview between the two states. Since Imran Khan came into power as prime minister of Pakistan in 2018, a gradual shift has been noticed in diplomatic narratives of Pakistan on various issues being forthright and vociferous. Imran Khan is generally viewed as a man with an independent mindset and straightforward approach. However, Khan was elected as a prime minister of Pakistan on August 13, 2018 where previously most of head of governments were sacked or ousted whenever they crossed redline with all powerful military-led Establishment due to disagreements on foreign policy issues. At the time of Khan's taking charge of premiership, Pakistan was facing critical challenges of revamping its relationship with US while at the same time evading taking baggage of failure of US policy in Afghanistan. In the wake of US's view of Pakistan's failure to devise appropriate measures to address the challenges of extremism and terrorism, American aid was also halted. This was the time when Pakistan critically needed proximately a bailout package as the country was placed in a 'Grey list' by global financial watch dog; Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Additionally, Pakistan had to counter Indian efforts to internationally isolate her. (Khattak 2018) Khan is compared with other populist leaders at global level like British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, American president Donald Trump, Victor Orban Hungary's prime minister and Indian Prime Minister; Narendra Modi etc. (Achakzai 2021) The substance of the comparison of Imran Khan with these global populist leaders is that they all share the same tool box to attract their voters; mainly the issues connecting domestic politics of their states with respective foreign policy choices.

This paper is an attempt to look into the means and ways of public diplomacy employed by Khan to apparently portray a bigger impact of his charismatic personality on foreign policy of Pakistan. Khan's public diplomacy mainly consisted of three key components; visits to foreign countries, pronouncing foreign policy discourses through social media especially his twitter handles and speech diplomacy. This study primarily focuses on the third component; the role of speech diplomacy of Imran Khan to plead the case of Pakistan at international forums as well as dealing with the emergent challenges of foreign policy through his speaking skills and most importantly building Pakistan's firm diplomatic narrative to overcome structural shortcomings of other aspects of diplomacy of Pakistan. Khan

used argumentation discourse into his international public oratory to persuade and convince his audiences about his ideas about West, Islamophobia and Pakistan's independent foreign policy choices by building the narratives on evidence and logic.

### **Research Methodology**

The underlying study incorporated a qualitative and an interpretive method; discourse analysis<sup>1</sup> to explicate the interpretation of the key themes of Imran Khan's five speeches and their contextual understanding. Discourse analysis involves investigation of various components of the written, verbal, visual or pictorial material under consideration like words, paragraph, sentence construction, sentence length, attributes, themes, frequencies and pattern. This study however does not take into account the technical quantities of language like sentences and words as socio-political approach of discourse analysis has been used. Critical discourse analysis as socio-political approach helps to understand the relationship between language and power. This research primarily focuses on structure and strategy of political talk by Imran Khan in his five speeches pronounced at international forums as Prime Minister of Pakistan. Critical discourse analysis approach with key focuses on structure of Khan's talk in respective speeches analyzed that how Khan created emphasis on certain concepts and built narrative for diplomatic means in given setting and participants. The research analyzes that how Khan used discursive prose to coherently proceed from one topic to another to strengthened his political argument. The intent of Khan's discursive talk was characterized by analytical reasoning to resolving multifaceted issues like Eurocentrism, Islamophobia, developing states socio-economic issues, constrains for Pakistan in geo-political settings etc. into a simpler one by presenting Pakistan's world view. Critical discourse analysis of the structure of language and strategy employed by Khan helped researcher to examine the function and meaning of language to assert diplomatic goals of Pakistani state. These five speeches of Khan are situated in the multiple contextual factors, for instance; Imran Khan's background and political views, underlying reason of speeches, setting of audience, social, political and historical milieu of Pakistan. The data for critical discourse analysis was collected through electronic version of Khan's Speeches while carefully noting the key themes, frequency of certain concepts, body language and gestures within the context of three main factors; populist narratives at home, Khan's personal experiences and foreign policy rational of Pakistan.

### **Literature Review**

Discourse is a spoken and written exchange of ideas with articulated meaning and a clear purpose. Language studies largely focus on individual meaning of words however discourse studies are more concerned with overall underlying meaning carried by the language in a given context. The respective context can be understood

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<sup>1</sup> Discourse analysis is an effective tool for studying the political meaning extracted from written or spoken text. See for steps of discourse analysis; Luo, A (June 19, 2020). Discourse Analysis: A Step by Step Guide with Examples. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/discourse-analysis/> Also see for political discourse; Chilton, P. (2004). Analyzing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice. Routledge, London. <https://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Analysing-political-discourse-Theory-and-Practice-by-Paul-Chilton.pdf>

as political, social, cultural and historical background of the discourse under consideration.

Saeed (Saeed, et al. 2020) explains that the most prominent theory for analyzing influence in political debate is socio-cognitive philosophy. This technique to discourse is known as social constructivism, a comprehensive concept or ideology that claims that democratic socialists build civil and political actuality.' It highlights that such 'structures' are depictions that perhaps the brain implements and that they must be treated seriously and thoroughly examined. This model suggests that mental projections are represented by highlighting the positive qualities of 'Us' and the negative qualities of 'Them' and expressing underlying attitudes and beliefs through textual or spoken speech. Elected elites use this notion to acquire the listener's confidence and encourage individuals to believe their desired ideology, thoughts, perspectives, and thinking. The prediction approach is a persuasion technique in which speakers employ assumptions and features of negative or good traits to influence the listeners.

Regardless of the fact that populist politicians are a hot issue in current political science research, they are nonetheless seen as "outsiders" or "challengers." Nevertheless, political developments over the last decade or two show that populist political groups have become incorporated into many countries' institutional arrangements. Although populist political organizations and leadership have typically been classified as left-wing, centrist, or right-wing, academics have proposed a new classification: valence ideologues. Valence populism resembles the 'centrist' populists in its ideology. The previous (centrist) nomenclature, on the other hand, "directly or indirectly refers to the ideological or geometric center of the party structure." Nevertheless, valence populists may occasionally take specific stances. Nonetheless, they are "flexible, free-floating, and, sometimes, inconsistent" because of an undiluted definition of populism that influences their view of the social and economic problems. "Valence populists thus adhere to a 'pure' form of populism, in which they are nor right-wing or left-wing." After constructing the valence impression of populist parties and theorizing the global populism discourse, Khalid examines Imran Khan, Pakistan's ex-Prime Minister, and his political group, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (Pakistan Justice Party) (PTI), arguing that Khan is an excellent example of valence populist whose intellectual transitions on the political landscape have been aided by the valence image.

Khan's political approach differs significantly from those of Bhutto, but he's been regarded as a brilliant speaker with a populist approach influenced by liberal views such as advancing women's rights, religious liberty, freedom of speech, and the eradication of fraud and bribery. Throughout the 2018 electorate, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek Insaf pioneered the idea of "accountability of all corrupt politicians" to eliminate inheritable politics and political aristocracies. Khan likewise utilized Sharia Law arguments to justify women's rights and minorities' rights, whereas continuing to support the importance of good alliances with several other Muslim states.

Imran Khan isn't the first Pakistani politician to utilize populism to grab control. Belief and the hope of a new life have been exploited by religious leaders, politicians, and army generals to obtain support or legitimize their acts. Khan's populism is remarkable in that he's been capable of integrating a wide range of views

into a consistent populist discourse that has won him popularity among "the people." Khan has utilized the government system to undertake witch hunts targeting political opponents and suppress critics in the last three years. In a society where the balance of powers between the judicial system, legislature, federal bureaucracy, and intelligence services has traditionally been unclear, this is problematic. To excuse his vengeful, dictatorial behavior, Khan has combined numerous beliefs like as anti-corruption, anti-elitism, hoaxes, and a mission to establish Pakistan a "just Islamic state" centered on Medina. Islamism defines Khan's combined beliefs and political rhetoric as a method of perceiving the world and an initiator of change to address all societal concerns. His fans are predominantly young (the plurality of Pakistanis are under 30), which is problematic. During his leadership, Quranic schooling, Muslim victimization, a surge of Pan-Islamism, and dread of the "West" and non-Muslims have all been encouraged. Khan has been ranked amongst "The Muslim 500" for his initiatives and radicalization of the country's youngsters.

(Shah and Alyas 2019) offered a critical discourse analysis of Khan's speech at 'Global Peace and Unity Forum 2015' however respective research largely provides the technical analysis of language used in his speeches while lacking account of qualitative analysis with descriptive and analytical approach connecting to other relevant variables. (Ali, Rashid and Abbas 2020) analyzed the two speeches of Khan made at UNGA in 2019 and 2020 in the terms of language used and key issues discussed. (Ahmed, Amir and Ahmad 2020) studied the Khan's speech of 2019 at UNGA through Speech Act Theory however key intent of research was limited to Islamophobia while focusing more on technical function of language in political discourse. Additionally, these researches on Khan's Speeches do not explain that how political discourse and its extracted meaning, intent and direction contribute to construct political and diplomatic narratives of Pakistan while looking Khan's speeches as a mean of diplomacy. There is dearth of adequate literature on case studies of Pakistan to understand the role of language in forming the structure of political discourse, political activity and its role to construct diplomatic narrative of Pakistan.

### **Research Questions**

The underlying research proceeds with following research questions;

- Why populist narratives derived from domestic politics are reflected in Khan's speeches at International forums as Prime Minister of Pakistan?
- How assumptions and political beliefs of Khan in particular and generally Pakistan's world views are communicated through his speeches?
- How Khan used his political rhetoric to persuade international audience to pursue diplomatic goals of Pakistan?
- How the structure of Khan's speeches created emphasis on certain issues and built diplomatic narratives of Pakistan?

### **Key Themes of Imran Khan's Selected Speeches at International forums as a Prime Minister of Pakistan**

### Ideological Factors of the Middle East

Date	Forum	Speech/Interview	Key Themes
September 27, 2019	74 <sup>th</sup> United Nations General Debate at UNGA	Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rise of Islamophobia</li> <li>• Climate Change</li> <li>• Money Laundering at International level</li> <li>• Kashmir problem</li> </ul>
September 25, 2020	75 <sup>th</sup> United Nations General Debate at UNGA	Speech (Virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Populist Narrative of State of Medina.</li> <li>• Response to concerns of West about Radical Islam in Pakistan</li> <li>• Indian Weak moral grounds</li> <li>• Addressing differences Between West and Developing world</li> </ul>
September 25, 2021	76 <sup>th</sup> United Nations General Debate at UNGA	Speech (Virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghan Issue</li> <li>• Kashmir</li> </ul>
December 19, 2021	17th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC	Keynote Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghan Humanitarian Disaster</li> <li>• Reminder to Resolve Palestine &amp; Kashmir issues.</li> <li>• Challenges of Accommodating Afghan Refugees.</li> </ul>
March 22, 2022	48th Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation(OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad	Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamophobia</li> <li>• Highlighted Kashmir issue</li> <li>• Money laundering and Rule of Law</li> <li>• Culture and Religion and How West is Confused between the Two.</li> <li>• Plea to Muslim states &amp; China to help end Russia's War in Ukraine</li> </ul>

#### 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Debate at UNGA

The 74<sup>th</sup> General Debate session of the United Nations was held on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019. On this occasion, Prime Minister Imran Khan addressed an impassioned speech to the United Nations General Assembly that caused the entire globe to sit up and take notice. He addressed global topics such as climate change, money laundering, terrorism, and Islamophobia before discussing Indian atrocities in occupied Kashmir. His address concentrated on Islamophobia and the Indian control of Kashmir. He spoke so passionately that the assembly praised him several times throughout his address. PM Imran successfully knocked off all notions of extreme Islam in the Western world, declaring there was only one authentic Islam. He repeatedly asserted that the concept of radicalism in Islam didn't exist and was a portrayed image of the West. His stance projected him as a representative of the Muslim world rather than just Pakistan. He began with international issues and purposefully avoided Kashmir till the conclusion. He warned the audience how West's practices encouraged terrorism. And he got UN leaders to reflect about how far the Islamic community had been targeted. He effectively addressed his four points using comparative analysis. He compared the issues globally then with Pakistan for all 4 of his points hence resulting in a very strong forfeit for his stance. Khan's speech outshined every motive India has made and has overcome any flaws or weaknesses in Pakistan's stance on Kashmir.

Khan has very keen and strong observation skills in comparison to other political elite of Pakistan and he is used to incorporating these observations in his comparative analysis technique to make his argument strong and convincing. He has

also used this technique to balance out the criticism he places on his opponents in comparison to traditional India Pakistan banter of firing blames at each other. He diplomatically connects Pakistan's diplomatic standings and interests to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Agenda and used to present Pakistani case in a way that leaves very less chances to challenge his narrative on moral grounds. As most of Khan's youth has passed living in the West, he knows their temperament and psychic well enough and isn't much impressed by them. The element of Euro centralism is not seen in his talks and narrative which clearly conveys the fact that Khan isn't influenced or impressed by the West and its culture in comparison to other Asian or third world state leaders. Diplomatically, he uses examples from the West to tackle and cater the somewhat successful image India has established that Pakistan is behind the terrorist uprisings in Indian Occupied Kashmir. Khan has never been the one to hesitate to say what's on his mind and it can be seen in the way he criticizes the hypocrisy and double standards of the West.

### **75<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Debate at UNGA**

Islamism defines Khan's combined beliefs and populist rhetoric as a method of perceiving the society and an inspirational figure to address all societal concerns. Khan is very famous for his populous slogans "Naya Pakistan" (New Pakistan) and "Hum sb ka Naya Pakistan" (New Pakistan is all ours) and has gained much support from youth in Pakistan. The assertion of populous narrative of Naya Pakistan has attained much inner support for Khan and has piqued the interest of foreign countries too. Khan's address of 2020 much like the previous one was detailed and addressed many of the concerns of the Muslim Bloc. While explaining the concept of Naya Pakistan, Khan has used the basis of 'Riyasat e Medina' as his model for forming a better and new version of Pakistan. While talking about this, he simultaneously addressed West's concern about radical Islam in Pakistan. He is clearly seen stating that there exists only one Islam and that is the Islam of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W). While talking about Radical Islam, Khan narrated his experience and skillfully conveyed the fact that there are two sides to a picture and in the case of Radicalization of Islam, there is a need to understand that whether it is Islam or Christianity or whether it is West or the Muslim Block there always exists diversity of people in every society: mainly extremists and moderates. Moving forward, Khan talked about his relationship with India and tactfully criticized India on its weak moral and ethical grounds contrary to the traditional India-Pakistan banter. This tactful speaking of Khan has leveled his position up from India which was previously not good due to Pakistan's shortcomings in the Kashmir Issue. Another thing to notice in his speech is that Khan when talking uses the terms "West" and "Muslim World" rather than US and Pakistan which is a clear indication that he promotes the concept of blocs rather than single entities. Furthermore, while talking about humanitarianism and Human rights, he urged the UN declare an official day (which was later declared as 15<sup>th</sup> March) as the day to combat Islamophobia. The main focus of Khan's speech was however the Kashmir Issue. He highlighted how the Indian government was committing genocide in Kashmir while also highlighting it as a human rights violation according to the Geneva Pact (and it is also a war crime) and later on he criticized Modi's radicalization in the region. Kashmir's case in Khan's words has been presented in the light of international human right's violation and genocide rather than the traditional rivalry. He portrays Kashmir as an

international issue rather than an intra-state affair between two states and his intent has been so far successful.

Compared to previous political elites, Khan has been seen as a much more successful and more liked speaker in the UN and locally due to the fact that he doesn't hesitate to speak his mind and he uses his variety of knowledge to plead and advocate his points thus leaving less room for disagreement. Khan's body language in his speeches narrates the very motive that he is very sure of what he is saying and that he is not merely stating his opinion but asserting his point of view. From his speeches, it can be analyzed that Khan is diverting Pakistan's foreign policy towards a direction which is quite similar in the case of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Rather than promoting a pro West stance, Khan can be seen promulgating a Muslim Bloc and China alliance.

### **76<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Debate at UNGA**

Khan's speech in 2021 started off with the agenda of "Covid and vaccine equity" where he highlighted how developing and third world states were not given the adequate services of Covid vaccines and then went on to talk about how the developed states were laundering money from the developing states resulting in an unbalanced proportion. He further went on to urge United Nations to supervise the equal distribution of assets to developing countries as for years developing states had plundered in poverty and hunger. Going on, he proclaimed that provision of climate change was another important issue which was being ignored by most states and could be harmful in the future for all living beings. In this regard, he mentioned 'Ehsaas Program' and tree plantation to validate that Pakistan was playing its part in the struggle to overcome climate change in the world but he insisted that only one country couldn't change things. They needed the support of all countries and it could only be a joint effort. While talking about the West, Khan used terms such as "Islamophobia, Extremist Islam and Xenophobic tendencies" and effectively criticized the West for promoting extremism against Islam in a very dignified manner and gave an example from the case of the man who shot 50 people in New Zealand. While narrating this, he validated his point saying that extremism existed in every society and the difference was that one side of the story was promulgated while the other was kept hidden. He very bravely called out the West for being hypocritical in accordance to RSS<sup>2</sup> where Modi is a lifelong member. The RSS is an organization known for being built on the concept of Fascism. Furthermore, he condemned UN to take action against the snatching of burial of Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Shah Gillani by the Indian troops and urged them to conduct a proper Islamic burial for the late leader. He warned the UN of the consequences India would face after the lockdown implemented in Indian Held Kashmir was lifted. He narrated the incident in similarization to a movie where a boy kills people after being suppressed in a society for long. Comparing the two scenarios, he said that there would come a time soon where the Kashmiri people would come out of their homes and pick up ammunitions to fight off the Indian troops themselves and the Indian government should be afraid of when that time comes.

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<sup>2</sup> The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is a Hindu nationalist, right-wing armed voluntary institution in India. The RSS is the originator of the Sangh Parivar, a vast group of institutions with an influence in all aspects of Indian community.

### **17th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary session also termed as the emergency session was initiated with Khan's address to the foreign ministers. Imran Khan expressed disappointment for the institution's "split" attitude and incapacity or reluctance to join together over a shared goal during his opening address. The OIC is a platform for Pakistan to promote its entrenched influence in the region, specifically in the context of the Kashmir problem. It has frequently utilized the forum to criticize India's decisions and measures in the area, and it has urged affiliates to oppose New Delhi. Although various declarations and press statements have been issued, most OIC member states, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, regard their ties with India as too important to risk over the protests of one individual. So Khan started off with the Afghan humanitarian crisis. He repeatedly asserted it that the Muslim Bloc needed to unite to save Afghanistan from its 41 years long war and it was the OIC's responsibility to unite the Muslim states in favor of Afghanistan against the West. He talked about diversity of culture and very calmly promulgated the fact that diversity exists within every society and is a natural phenomenon so labeling a community based on diversity within culture is ethically and morally wrong. Khan is seen as a very strong spokesman and to validate his argument, he knows where to hit to make his crowd agree with him. In this specific speech, Khan can be very effectively seen motivating this session onto a united stand for Afghanistan, Kashmir and Palestine. During the entire speech, Khan can be seen capturing the minister's attention effectively and almost 90 percent of the crowd can be seen attentively listening to him. Among the other themes he discussed were Islamophobia, terrorism and Kashmir Issue (HD 2021).

### **48th Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad**

The 48<sup>th</sup> meeting of OIC was materialized by Imran Khan as favorable image projection not only for Pakistan at international and regional level but also helped him to secure legitimacy among the electorates. Khan started the speech off with an incident from New Zealand where a man killed 50 Muslims in a mosque because he felt compelled to. He linked this incident to Islamophobia and how Muslims are being targeted and labeled with it. Furthermore, he explained how extremism existed in every society and was a natural phenomenon and later on went to boldly criticize the West for supporting one side of the story while ignoring the other. He rationally analyzed the flaws of the Muslim Bloc for not defending Muslims against Islamophobia and criticized the Muslim World for not standing up for themselves and for giving West the upper hand over them. Furthermore, he condemned the use of word "Moderate Muslims" by Muslim leaders as it validates that an extreme version exists whereas he is clearly previously seen asserting in his UN speeches that only one Islam exists and that is of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) While justifying his opinions, he took examples from the West from his time in England as a teenager and to a certain extent had gained support and interest from the crowd listening to him. Lastly he explained in detail how the West confused culture with religion and how both of them were different things just co related with each other (News 2022).

## Reflection of Pro-China Stances in Khan's Talk

In the wake of Khan's concerns regarding Islamophobia expressed on international forums, he refused to condemn China on its treatment of Uighur Muslims living in western part of China while claiming that all the issues with China are discussed behind the closed doors. In comparison with an open criticism on US actions in Afghanistan and critique of its policy towards Pakistan, Khan's favorable policy towards China was quite perceptible during his interview with Jonathan Swan at AXIOS in 2021. Khan clearly asserted the importance of China by calling the country as the greatest friend of Pakistan in most difficult times. Khan is generally able to address the most difficult questions in conversations by employing a 'comparative analysis' technique while shifting the attention of the talk towards another issue related to Pakistan's interests. This was the similar case when responding to his alleged hypocrisy on China's treatment of Uighur Muslims during his interview to AXIOS, Khan perceptively mentioned the killings of one lac Kashmiris and deployment of 8 lac Indian troops while calling Indian-held Kashmir an open prison. Khan straightforwardly called the western approach duplicity of highlighting the Uighur Muslims while overlooking the humane crisis in Kashmir under Indian control. Khan is quite tactful during his conversations on foreign policy by bringing a rigorous justification of his political and diplomatic standings. In response to the contention of being silent on Uighur Muslims issue due to Chinese investments in Pakistan, Khan rationally highlighted the peripheral approach of Pakistan's foreign policy while providing that he is more concerned about the happenings on Pakistan's border. Khan while referring to the situations around the globe like in Palestine, Libya, Somalia, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan argued that Pakistan cannot take care of everything. He pointed out that Pakistan is concerned significantly about Kashmir more than any issue around the globe as the half part of respective territory is part of Pakistani state.

Pakistan's China policy under Khan became more clear and straightforward. Khan practically discarded Pakistan's previous approach of maintaining its relations with China while not offending US. In the wake of boycott of Beijing Olympics 2022 by US and other countries<sup>3</sup> on the supposed account of Human rights abuses by China, Khan was one of the few international leaders who along with Pakistani delegations attended the opening ceremony and received warm welcome from Chinese officials. (The Express Tribune 2022) Pakistan's strategic inclination towards China was significantly echoed by its invitation to Chinese Foreign Minister; Wang Yi to attend 48 session of OIC held at Islamabad. This helped China to enhance its prospectus of commercial relations with Muslim world which previously improved through Chinese vaccine diplomacy in OIC countries.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Canada, UK, Australia & Lithuania were other important states who boycotted the Beijing Olympics. See; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-09/what-countries-are-boycotting-the-2022-beijing-olympics-here-s-a-running-list>. New Zealand also did not attend the event & also notified China about her concerns about human rights violation however her decision of not attending Beijing Olympics were more to do with its Covid related policy. See; <https://www.axios.com/2021/12/08/diplomatic-boycott-beijing-olympics-list-countries>

<sup>4</sup> Why China's vaccine diplomacy is winning. July 26, 2021. <https://uclg-aspac.org/brlc/2021/07/26/why-chinas-vaccine-diplomacy-is-winning/>

### **Khan's Highpoints to Resolve Global Issues**

Under Khan, Pakistan came into international limelight on several occasions for making foreign policy choices which were not expected from the country due to its economic constraints. Apart from his abrupt and bold statements in international and domestic politics, Khan enhanced Pakistan's international positioning while increasing country's credibility and say in international issues. In his keynote speech at 17<sup>th</sup> extraordinary meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, Khan reminded International community for their negligence towards Afghan humanitarian crisis while warning that if Afghan issue remained unaddressed it would bring a spillover effect to other countries. Khan without any hesitation mentioned US in wake of Afghan crisis while explicating that persistent chaos in Afghanistan will certainly not in favor of US. Additionally, Khan highlighted Pakistan's limitations to accommodate Afghan refugees in case of augmentation of humanitarian crisis in a war-torn country. Through his well-known comparative analysis argument technique, he pointed out that developed states are facing challenges to accommodate few thousands of refugees then how can his country can manage mass exodus from Afghanistan. (OIC summit: PM Imran calls for immediate action to avert humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan 2021) Khan seemed quite wise to decorously assess whether to mention the states in course of his criticism to make his diplomatic narrative morally correct rather than going with traditional condemnation of opponent or unfriendly states. It was apparent when during 48<sup>th</sup> meeting of OIC held at Islamabad; Khan expounded about Palestine and Kashmir in his inaugural speech without mentioning India and Israel. Khan was fully aware of growing commercial relations of Pakistan's traditional rival; India with many of OIC states like Saudi Arab, UAE, Qatar, Indonesia, Bahrain, Bangladesh etc. Khan did not act irrational or to have undue expectations from OIC countries however while calling OIC a 'divided house' suggested to take a united stand on certain issues to pronounce a collective credible voice in international politics. He judiciously advised that "I am not talking about altering foreign policies, all of us have different foreign policies, but, on core issues, I am asking the OIC that unless we have a united front, these abuses will happen, like in Palestine where daylight robbery is going on'. Khan also made Pakistan a focal point at international stage by pronouncing its pro-Russian policy on Ukraine issue. Unlikely taking sides during the Russian war in Ukraine and playing blame games, Khan made a plea at 48<sup>th</sup> meeting of OIC Council of Foreign Minister held in Islamabad in March 2022 to Muslim countries and China to jointly initiate efforts to end Russian war in Ukraine. Khan expressed the urge to end the respective conflict in the wake of already rising prices of energy resources like oil, gas and food items like wheat as developing countries were much affected by the international price hike. ( Prime Minister Imran Khan Speech at the 48th Session of OIC Council 2022)

### **Concluding Remarks**

Political discourse is purposefully constructed to converse and convince the public about particular philosophies that are implicitly prevalent in the discussion and debate. Imran Khan employs the Aristotelian argumentative model, which includes discourse, prediction tactic, self-presentation, and deleterious Others-presentation approach, to convince his audience to pursue his opinion. Khan can be seen

effectively persuading his audience whether international or local with his ample knowledge and way of conversing. Khan with his comparison technique didn't hesitate to criticize his opponents and uses references for his opponents to build a strong and agreeable narrative. It is seen that Khan's speech diplomacy in no time apparently boosted the public relations of Pakistan with various countries despite the fact that Pakistan had no noticeable benefits to offer. Khan's populist rhetoric both at home and abroad interpreted the politics in the terms of a competition between good versus bad or evil. Khan's seeming foreign policy accomplishments lay in symbolism as it strengthened the moral and diplomatic standings of Pakistan while largely securing lip service support to the country and remained less successful to bring any meaningful prospectus for Pakistan in the terms of economic, material or strategic alternatives. Khan used populist narratives in his foreign policy approach like an ideology which led to development of a political creed making his followers in country and abroad to believe that what he offers is largely independence of Pakistan from foreign influences. The end of Khan's premiership as result of his resignation in wake of a 'no confidence motion' against him also strengthened a populist belief at home and among many of Muslims around the globe that popular leaders of Islamic states are always removed by a global conspiracy.

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