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TURKEY-PAKISTAN RELATIONS AND THE RISE OF GEO-ECONOMIC STATECRAFT

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the dynamic relationship between Pakistan and Turkey, examining their trade, investment and collaboration in strategic sectors through the lens of neoliberalism. How neoliberal economic policies have influenced bilateral trade, investment flows, and economic cooperation between these nations? What are the primary challenges and opportunities for Pakistan and Turkey in strengthening their geo-economics relations? The research leans on the concept that neoliberalism uses market liberalization with privatization and minimal government role to build economic connections alongside removing trade barriers and investment restrictions. Through qualitative research examining policy documents, economic data and trade agreements; the study provides an in-depth exploration of the economic interactions between Turkey and Pakistan. Both nations benefit from neoliberal policy implementations to increased economic ties yet challenges such as government interventions and protectionist measures and political turbulence block the full achievement of these policies. The research points to promising potential in fostering deeper economic integration through strategic development of renewable energy, textile sectors, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and digital infrastructure. The research suggests that strategic growth can occur through three vital recommendations: first officials must finalize an FTA implementation then policy variables should prioritize public-private partnerships across key sectors and third officials must increase digital infrastructure to enhance trade capabilities. The steps recommended would dramatically enhance economic ties between Turkey and Pakistan thereby promoting mutual development while enhancing regional peace.

Keywords: Pakistan, Turkey, Neoliberalism, Economic Cooperation, Challenges, Opportunities

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1. Introduction

The relations that bind Pakistan and Turkey together have been growing, getting deeper and stronger throughout history having similar interest on political and economic grounds. The diplomatic relationship which started after Pakistan's independence has led them to support each other on international platforms, especially the UN. The connection is not just diplomatic relations but open to sectors such as defense, trade, and cultural exchange. Historical Islamic Commonwealth and British Colonialism have always presented the idea of kinship and a bond that has strongly evolved over the years to form the foundation of both nations. Throughout history, such relationship varied in forms - strategic partnerships in defense and security, economic cooperation, cultural affairs, and educational exchanges were interlaced and formed an integrated and multi-faceted alliance, which has remained intact though the turbulent time of political changes. Shedding light upon neo-liberalism as a tool for the analysis of economic interaction.ⁱ Hence, the study poses questions as follows: How have economic policies influenced bilateral trade, investment, and economic cooperation between Pakistan and Turkey? What are the primary challenges and opportunities for Pakistan and Turkey in strengthening their economic and relations? These pertinent questions will be addressed theoretically and empirically.

The influence of neo-liberalism on economic relations between Pakistan and Turkey deserves substantial examination. The core elements of free markets alongside privatization together with minimal state intervention have strongly shaped how these nations adopted their domestic economic plans and international diplomatic positions. Under neoliberal reforms both countries developed economic friendliness and liberalized trade relations by attracting foreign investment through capital inflows. These modifications strengthen economic relationships and attract foreign investments that produce higher national stability and greater prosperity in both nations. The foreign policy strategies of these countries directly incorporate neo-liberal elements because their goal is expanding soft power both domestically and internationally through economic policies and diplomatic networks. Economic partnerships based on neo-liberalism principles operate as tools for building diplomatic bonds which strengthen economic exchange relationships and political alliances throughout the region.ⁱⁱ

Research investigates the multifaceted dynamics between Pakistan and Turkey with specific evaluation of their bilateral ties through the analysis of neo-liberal economic models and geopolitical strategies. The research seeks to understand how neo-liberal economic approaches affect trade and investment activity between the two nations along with their economic partnership development. The research seeks to

identify both challenges and potential opportunities within their economic partnership framework.

This investigative work investigates Pakistan-Turkey relationship dynamics under the impact of neo-liberalism to show its influence on their bilateral economic and political relationships. This analysis extends to demonstrate the strategic outlook of their partnership on global policy dynamics including the effects on regional stability and worldwide positioning.ⁱⁱⁱ

2. Literature review

In the changing political sands on the global arena, the multilateral nexus between Pakistan and Turkey, with its historical, cultural, and strategic connections, serves as a clear indication of the reinsurance of ties between these two nations. Through this literature review, the interaction of Pakistan-Turkey in terms of neoliberalism in which economic liberalization, political cooperation and socio-cultural exchange, line up taking a global order into account will be over viewed. The review mirrors the model of neoliberalism and aims to reflect the progression in bilateral relations by highlighting elements of economic cooperation, defense collaboration, and joint support to each other on the international arena.

Turkey and Pakistan have a long history of cordial and friendly bilateral relations, based on shared religious, cultural, and historical bonds.^{iv} The diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Turkey date back to 1947, with Turkey being among the first countries to recognize Pakistan upon its establishment. The cultural, geopolitical, and religious affinities between the two nations have been influential in fostering a robust connection.

After gaining their freedom, Turkey and Pakistan initiated diplomatic and military cooperation very fast, later establishing a strong network connecting both nations. The Joint Communique between Turk and Pakistan in 1954 was the starting point for further development of cooperation both in political and economic fields, showing the common interest on broad range of subjects.^v Defense and security cooperation have also been established to enhance their defense capabilities^{vi}, with both countries engaging in joint military exercises and defense production projects. This cooperation not only enhances their defense capabilities but also serves as a mechanism for addressing shared security threats.^{vii}

Furthermore with Turkey's assertive backing of Pakistan at the international sphere, the disputed region of Kashmir being a clear example, there is a tangible display of the unity and common agendas between the two countries. Many two-country's leaders have been in diplomacy and exchange visits to boost their political and economic ties and to build trust and unity for the two nations.^{viii}

Economic collaboration has been facilitated by the Pakistan-Turkey Free Trade Agreement, leading to increased trade and investment between the two nations.^{ix} From a neoliberal standpoint, the evolving dynamics of Pakistan-Turkey relations reflect a convergence of economic interests, trade partnerships, and shared developmental goals. The potential for expanding the current trade volume between the two nations from \$899 million to \$10 billion underscores the untapped economic opportunities awaiting exploration.^x Providing neoliberal led rule of free trade and investment promotion, thus, paves the way for the development of stronger and profitable ties between Pakistan and Turkey. Also, they have always led to growth of mutual understanding and respect between the participants due to educational and cultural exchanges.^{xi}

Through mutual support both at the regional and international levels, both states have been able to showcase their power combined giving them a voice of two at the regional and international profile. While it is no less true that there is peaceful and friendly economic environment, it still has not been so exploited very successfully, and thus more in-depth exploration is required. Nevertheless, the two nations are likely to have a good future in their bilateral partnership since there are chances of them overcoming challenges that exist and improving in various fields.

3. Theoretical Framework

This section explores neo-liberalism to explain events in Pakistan-Turkey relations. It summarizes key neo-liberalist perspectives providing a theoretical framework for this study.

Neoliberalism champions free market capitalism, privatization, deregulation and a reduced role for the state in economic activities. Neoliberalism evolved into the primary economic doctrine during the late twentieth century and is dominantly steering national policy across countries and operating as a guiding force in international commerce and worldwide financial systems. Neoliberalism establishes market systems through minimal government control so it can maximize resource use, creativity and drive economic development.^{xii}

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) play a central role in economic cooperation through the lens of neoliberalism, functioning as both economic channels and geopolitical instruments. Organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and regional development banks provide financial aid, loans, and expertise to significant countries globally. Additionally, civil society has gained prominence in the global economic landscape, with NGOs, advocacy groups, and grassroots movements advocating for human rights, environmental sustainability, and fair trade. These groups influence global economic governance and can impact

governmental and international bodies, demonstrating the interconnectedness of member countries.^{xiii}

Given the mutual interest in expanding commercial cooperation, the neoliberal theoretical approach effectively analyzes the economic aspects of Turkey-Pakistan relations, including trade, energy projects, technology transfer, and potential investment. Neoliberalism emphasizes market connectivity and minimal state interference, which aligns with the strategies of both nations in the context of evolving international politics, particularly in South Asia. Pakistan's economic fragility, despite an IMF bailout, keeps it reliant on external loans and aid. Recently, Pakistan has been strengthening trade and energy ties with China under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and seeking similar cooperation with Turkey. This collaboration aims to enhance economic resilience and connectivity in the region.

Nationwide economic procedures that promote free trade combined with open markets and global capital operation have become fundamental to economic diplomacy and international negotiations under neoliberalism. The ideology has produced key global economic developments by creating the World Trade Organization (WTO) and establishing regional trade agreements to eliminate trade barriers and boost economic integration. As part of economic diplomacy neoliberalism enables states to advance Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) and transnational partnerships throughout international market competitiveness to establish liberating trade spaces and facilitate global economic collaboration. Neoliberal policies have drawn criticism because they generate privacy breaches as well as reduce national autonomy and create financial inequality among international countries. The existing support systems for vulnerable populations come under scrutiny when economic global trends advance.^{xiv}

A new diplomatic and economic framework structures the strategic bond between Pakistan and Turkey which favors immediate trade partnerships and multi-tier bilateral relations. These two countries adopted neoliberal principles to draw outside investments and adopt economic deregulation while participating in domestic and worldwide trade agreements. The foundation of neoliberalism enables to develop better ties for discussing joint ventures about Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and teamwork in sectors such as defense, construction and telecommunications. Conventionally, accepted as globalization's economic model neoliberalism shapes worldwide policy changes through privatization and free-market principles to create heightened competitive conditions. International platforms bring countries together to demonstrate the accelerating influence of global relations while building economic partnerships and joint security programs in interconnected world.^{xv}

4. Methodology

This research employs qualitative methods to study policy documents with trade agreements along with diplomatic exchanges from Pakistan and Turkey while integrating trade statistics with investment information and economic indicators from their bilateral economic relationship.

Official formal documents together with governmental statistics from Pakistan and Turkey, and trade arrangements and diplomatic exchanges form the primary data base for this research. This research also includes secondary resource materials as part of the study. Multiple academic frameworks research papers alongside international organization reports and news articles analyze how Turkey and Pakistan maintain their relations. The registry with numerous documented records provides enough strength to manage various dimensions of relations of both Pakistan and Turkey as well as the trade statistics, investment flows and economic performance indicators concerned with the bilateral interaction of those two countries.

A qualitative research method includes a methodical document examination process which identifies essential themes and patterns alongside critical developments happening between these two countries focusing economically. The analysis investigates fundamental cooperative forces behind alliances while examining neoliberal policy effects bilateral trade relations.^{xvi}

The economic analysis of the Pakistan-Turkey relationship utilizes trade data together with economic indicators and statistical findings as its essential measurement tools. The analysis contains examinations including trade volumes, balance of trade and traditional economic profiling. The reviewed economic data informs stakeholders about both the current challenges and forthcoming growth opportunities from their bilateral trading relationships. Through this segment, the analysis constructs understanding of the qualitative evaluation of bilateral relations.^{xvii}

5. Evolution of Relations

The ties between Turkey and Pakistan have an almost familial adherence to the culture of the two countries which can be traced back to the time before Pakistan gained independence in the year 1947. The Muslims of Indian Subcontinent struggled for the victory of the Turkish War of independence presenting what was a sort of religious and emotional connection. Being tireless in support as well as the backing of each other on the different multinational forums over various decades has only served to fortify the two countries' relationship. Such a diversities are further supported by various reciprocal visits by heads of states and a wide range of trade sectorial agreements. Historical pledging of substantial mutual interests has set a solid basis for the partnership of multi-dimensional agenda which incorporate political, economic, cultural, and defense spheres.^{xviii}

Some of the landmarks of Pakistan-Turkey relations are considered to be the Treaty of Friendship in 1954, which legally set up the system of cooperation. The two countries have not only been members of an array of such regional pacts and associations, but have also actively participated in the initiatives related to peace and security in their respective regions. Notably, through the formation of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council in 2009, which then paved the way for subsequent treaties regarding trade, investment, energy, and technology, the level of economic have significantly been boosted. Similarly, joint trainings and defense purchases have been working to promote the strategic aspect of their alliance relations. Lately, the countries has witnessed a foreign trade and investment renewal effort, as both sides have shown a great interest in this option.^{xix}

The shift to neo-liberal economic policies has been a determining factor of the economic framework in Pakistan-Turkey relations. The policies which open up markets have encouraged market integration, foreign direct investment as well as deepened trade between the two countries. The countries have tried to capitalize on their respective locations, and extend accessibility/ connectivity within the region through increasing inter-regional economic integration. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Turkey's Middle Corridor initiatives have become the tools that prove how they are changing the power trajectory of the region through their significant engagement in regional economic development. In addition, the practice of liberal policy in the economic field is faced with problems such as balancing of liberalization and social protection and the need to support the national indigenous economies. Despite these obstacles, on the other hand, neo-liberalism is considered as the driving power of these economies which lie on the balance, and this harbors the positive of a more dynamic economic interaction between Pakistan and Turkey.^{xx}

6. Economic Interactions

The economic ties between Pakistan and Turkey have much followed the neo-liberal approach that is mainly focused on export-led growth; this is underpinned by enhanced trade liberalization, foreign investment flows and more private sector activities. Both states have resulted in trade reciprocation with the aim of having their presence felt worldwide as they can participate fully in the realms of energy, trade, and textile deals. Through the strategic economic framework of Pak-Turk economic consortium, these two nations can achieve synchronization of their financial policies so that the trade, investments and the national economies can all be enhanced. In addition, the envisaged framework adopts a neo-liberal model based on market oriented, anti-barrier to trade and bilateral economic partnership enhancing. Nevertheless, the challenges posed by anti-dumping charges are the best illustration

of the ready need for well-timed and fine-tuned negotiations aimed and reaching the maximum outcomes.^{xxi}

The economic partnership of Pakistan with Turkey, built with the wide effects of neo-liberalism, shows a complicated exchange of cross-border connection, investment, and great ambition towards the goal of regional connectivity and development. Despite the historical depth of their defense and political ties, both nations are keen on translating their camaraderie into robust economic partnerships.

Influence of neo-liberal policies on Pakistan and Turkey economies greatly led to installation of free-market mechanisms and prices as motor in order to improve the national competitiveness and reduce role of the states in the economy. Alignment in this sense has created conditions which are supportive to trade and investment. It was stated by leaders during a bilateral meeting that the two countries share an interest of increasing the trade which will involve exploiting the untapped economic potential in the relationship.^{xxii} Turkish investments in Pakistan have taken a significant leap by now, surpassing the US\$ 1 billion landmark, which in no way refutes a growing economic collaboration.^{xxiii} Following Table 1 exhibits the bilateral trade showing surge in line with the neo-liberal principles:

Table 1. Bilateral Trade Turkey – Pakistan^{xxiv} (million USD)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 ^{xxv}
Export	289,1	347	352,3	462	550,1	620,1	867,8	800
Import	310,5	263	323,1	330	306,3	268,7	271,3	450
Volume	599,6	610	675,4	792	865,4	888,9	1139,1	1250

Despite the existence of a USD \$1250 million bilateral trade volume in 2022, both states aim to elevate this figure to better reflect their economic potential. In May 2024, The High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, has signed 13 memorandums of understanding, targeting to elevate the bilateral trade to \$5 billion. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, while speaking at the Foreign Office after a meeting with visiting Turkish FM Hakan Fidan, said the two sides agreed on increasing trade to \$5bn in three years.^{xxvi} This encompasses a comprehensive plan involving several joint groups working to improve ties in trade, investment, energy, banking, finance, and other sectors.^{xxvii} Several trade and tariff agreements have been signed between Pakistan and Turkey^{xxviii}, offering concessions on various tariff lines in both countries. Such initiatives are pivotal in the context of neo-liberal policies, promoting open markets and encouraging foreign direct investment.^{xxix}

The effects of Neo-liberal policies on Pakistan and Turkey's economy and trade are noticeable in many fundamental sectors. Moreover, both countries have been focusing on their cooperation in the area of infrastructure and energy and as such, the

Turkish senior official revealed that Turkey is supposed to take part in CPEC projects. Such cooperation could greatly be assumed to benefit Pakistan as it could significantly increase the connectivity of Pakistan to Western Asia, Europe, thus giving rise to the possibility of the transformation of regional energy and infrastructure landscapes.^{xxx} For several years now, both the countries concentrated on the development of renewable sources of energy such as biomass, solar, wind and geothermal to complement the general energy mix and decrease the various energy dependencies. With its schemes that forecast 30% of its energy mix to be green and renewable, Turkey appears to have shown a clear intention to create a sustainable energy framework for the country. While Pakistan is leveraging on renewable alternatives and looking to have 30% of its power needs met through renewables, reducing reliance on fossil fuels.^{xxxi}

Also, the collaboration in IT industry strengthens with the formation of a scientific research branch in National University of Science and Technology by Turkish Aerospace Industries. In this context, collaborative effort concentrates on achievements in cyber security, drone surveillance, radar system since this is what the neoliberal policy requires that include technology advancement and innovation.^{xxxii} Both Pakistan and Turkey noted a fast forward growth in the Information Technology part of their industries which was not a disappointment but caused to establish significantly cooperative relations and share knowledge in these. The online presence is on the rise in two countries which can be illustrated in mobile phone and internet services subscription numbers acceleration.^{xxxiii} The rapid growth of digital governance and e-governance practices in Turkey provides Pakistan with an occasion to learn from the Turkish practices in terms of implementing the digital governance methods. There is an opportunity in sharing of best practices among agencies which can be used to improve the development of said agencies' IT infrastructures. As a result, modernization of government services can be achieved and a more efficient, and transparent governance can be established in line with neo-liberal principles.^{xxxiv} These sectors exemplify the strategic alignment under neo-liberal principles, focusing on economic cooperation for mutual benefit.^{xxxv}

7. Challenges

However, even with a close economic relationship, the free trade and market liberalization is still one of the leading obstacles that should already be solved. The Pakistan-Turkey PTA has faced challenges because there are fears over trade deficit as well as the investor distrust regarding the protectionist policies. Moreover, the arising problems, like applying the anti-dumping tariff measures on the Pakistani commodities by the Turkish government, directly witness the intricacy of adopting the neo-liberal principles of free market by a nation with its specific economic policy.

Eliminating these obstacles depends on diplomatic agreement and enactment of proper regulations that ensure free trade and consideration about focal industries.^{xxxvi} Though the countries see the future potentially bright notes, few obstacles on the way to free trade and market liberalization between Pakistan and Turkey are still valid. They encompass difficulties and impediments with regard to red tape, visas, and shortage of a FTA. The FTA targets the volume of bilateral trade volume being elevated from \$1 billion to \$10 billion which indicates a huge jump in economic communication. Yet, these countries' trade volumes must overcome existing barriers and use the advantages of liberalization effectively in order to achieve which currently seems to be a quite ambitious goal.^{xxxvii}

The basis of the neo-liberal policy, that implores the state intervention and open markets, usually contradicts the government options in Islamabad and Ankara. For example, Turkey's economic model both during and after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) can be characterized by a combination of neoliberal economic policies and government doings. The discourse of this presidential term contains heavy state participation in notable sectors and institutionalized investments, running parallel to neoliberal reforms such as privatization and deregulation.^{xxxviii} Resembling this, the economic policies of Pakistan have swung between liberalization attempts and protectionism, with the state being the central character carrying out the duties of the economic planning and control over important industries.^{xxxix} These interventions reflect a nuanced approach to neo-liberalism, where economic liberalization coexists with state-led development initiatives.

Political instability and security problems in both countries make it more difficult to align with the tenets of neoliberalism politics. In Turkey, strong consolidation of power, which was followed by political shifts, has brought a lot of skeptical thoughts about democratic norms and governance making the political state of affairs and investor confidence become fragile.^{xl} The matter is worsened by the fact that it is happening in the same region where security challenges are also rampant and great political tensions exist. The Pakistani politics is also unstable like other times, due to the governance problem and security threat. Within the country, the internal militancy and conflict pose a profane danger to the state. Such elements make a sturdy and well-defined shape in which the application of neo-liberal policies can be realized as unworkable and inflexible, therefore, hampering the economic growth and discouraging foreign investment.^{xli} Furthermore, the geopolitical dynamics and internal policies of both countries, influenced by their respective historical, political, and economic contexts, present challenges to the neo-liberal agenda.

8. Opportunities for Deepening Economic Integration

Like all other budding economics with sizable geopolitical influence, Pakistan and Turkey can take a wider area of economic integration, particularly sectors that fit into neo-liberal paradigm like trade liberalization, market co-regulation, and privatization. On the identified foreign cooperation sectors, Information Technology (IT), renewable energy, infrastructure development and agriculture, among others, may offer opportunities for cooperation. This fact creates special environments in which Pakistan has an opportunity for agricultural output and IT talent pool while Turkey benefits from its others with advancements in renewable energy technologies and infrastructure development capabilities. Combined feedbacks towards these complementary skills will assist them to have more efficiency, creativity and high level of competition in a global economy. Collaboration on this items-specific matter can serve as a booster for countries' economic reforms and integration efforts, helping to ease the introduction of open and competitive markets in the two countries.^{xlii}

Private sector and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) represents the main elements for creating more and stricter economic links between Pakistan and Turkey. The private sector that consists of SMEs and large companies can stimulate innovation, investment and trade between those countries. Through their efforts various businesses may flourish between the two countries which will boost economic balance. The institutionalization of Business-to-Business (B2B) transactions, trade fairs, and joint ventures could allow access to the market and raise new business possibilities. Social groups, such as Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, as well as think tanks, cooperatively take part in the reinforcement of the economic integration to a deeper level by suggesting policy reforms, doing the research on trade issues between countries and promoting the people exchanges between the two nations. Through the initiative of communication and collaboration, these institutions are capable to mitigate the differences, promulgate the cultural acceptance, and lay the groundwork for future economical partnerships that is compliant with the neo-liberal prescriptions.^{xliii}

The economic potential within the CPEC framework constitutes a major channel for strengthening economic ties between Turkey and Pakistan, providing an outline of common economic benefits that all parties are marking. Being right in the center of Europe-Asia crossroads makes Turkey essential strategic partner for Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), thus providing China with the additional opportunities for entering European and West Asian markets through it^{xliv} (Hussain, 2021). Turkey's involvement in CPEC may help China to ease some of financial difficulties arising in the project and, therefore, to a greater extent to boost the economic partnership of Turkey with Pakistan.^{xlv}

9. Conclusions

This study has explored the multifaceted relationship between Pakistan and Turkey, emphasizing the role of neo-liberal principles in shaping their economic interactions. The analysis reveals that both countries have successfully leveraged neo-liberal policies to foster economic cooperation, particularly in sectors such as defense, renewable energy, and infrastructure development. Strategic partnerships and bilateral projects have been instrumental in enhancing trade and investment flows, driven by a shared commitment to market liberalization and private sector engagement.

However, challenges such as state intervention, protectionist measures, and the complexities of political and security landscapes have posed obstacles to the full realization of neo-liberal ideals. Despite these challenges, the deep-rooted bilateral ties between Pakistan and Turkey have shown resilience, adapting to changing global dynamics and regional contingencies. Several opportunities yet unexplored exist to enhance the volume of cooperation.

Policymakers should prioritize finalizing and implementing the FTA to facilitate greater trade liberalization, remove tariffs, and address non-tariff barriers. Encouraging public-private partnerships and joint ventures, especially in strategic sectors like renewable energy and infrastructure, can drive innovation and economic growth. Strengthening digital infrastructure and e-commerce platforms can open new channels for trade and collaboration, aligning with global trends towards digitalization. Enhancing cultural exchanges and business-to-business interactions can deepen mutual understanding and uncover new areas for cooperation.

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