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Issue Brief

Enhancing Pakistan's Global Profile and Influence: Priorities and Policy Options

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The global profile of a state is reflected through various elements of national power. This includes its military, economy, demography, social structure, technological advancement, political leadership, foreign policy, and participation in multilateral initiatives. Moreover, it includes its role in enhancing global peace and stability. Along with hard power, the soft power projection of a state cannot be ignored while talking about the global profile of a country.

As an indicator of national might, Pakistan has the sixth largest military force, is the 7th nuclear weapon state, has the world's sixth largest population, sixty percent of which comprises of youth which can be an important asset for the state if they are provided with proper opportunities and employment. This youth can provide a huge work force to cater to the global demand of the 21st century.

The unique geostrategic location of Pakistan is also unique, making it a major player in regional and as well as global politics. Its geographical proximity to the resource rich region in the Middle East and Central Asia makes it an important country for facilitating trade and transit all around the world.

Pakistan is also actively contributing to global peace and stability. Since 1960, Pakistan has contributed more than 160,000 troops to 42 peacekeeping missions of the United Nations (UN) and remained as one of largest troops contributor for many years. At present, more than 7500 troops are deployed in six mandated UN missions.

Pakistan is also making a huge contribution in the Global War Against Terrorism (GWOT) for maintenance of peace and stability of the region.

Pakistan is also emerging as an economically stable country with growing investors confidence. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a witness of this growth. This mega project will connect China and Pakistan with the neighbouring regions, and will not only enhance Pakistan's economic and trade connectivity, but will also serve to enhance its geostrategic significance in the region.

Furthermore, Pakistan is also projecting its soft power all around the world. The country has great potential in its IT industry - 1500 registered IT companies and 10,000 IT graduates enter Pakistan's IT market every year. These talented graduates and companies have exhibited their skills in IT fairs expos, summits, IT associations and soft power houses at the national level. Pakistan in trying to develop its IT sector and its share in the global IT sector is presently \$2.8 billion. Pakistani freelance IT programmers and application developers have become one of the most hired and sought after by American, British and Australian programmers.¹ In a century where technology is of utmost importance, such efforts are important and vital for any nation.

Despite all its potentials, there are many hurdles that are destroying the image of Pakistan abroad. For example terrorism and security situation of the country are the main huddles for Pakistan that find the most projection in international media and official circles. In order to check the projection of negative trends, there are certain policy options that the country must ensure to re-build and enhance its image aboard. Pakistan needs a sustained and well-integrated strategy to tap into its soft power, diasporas and public diplomacy outside Pakistan. The rich cultural heritage and the growing tourist industry must be projected with a renewed vigour to attract foreign nationals who are, at present, reluctant to make Pakistan their destination of choice. Our embassies and diasporas must be provided with the necessary support to organise cultural events and trade shows that are essential to showcase what Pakistan has to offer. Technological advancement, and strengthening of public diplomacy by using internet, digital communications and other similar technologies for perception building are also imperative.

Media can also play a pivotal role in enhancing Pakistan's image and national interests. Rather than vying for negative breaking news, it must adopt a strategy to project the positive aspects and developments in the country that will capture the attention of the international community. Besides the media, the social media and networking sites must be reinvigorated for constructive purposes to enhance and communicate the national narrative both within country and at global level. The youth of the country must be mobilised at dedicated centres for the

¹ <http://csscurrentaffairs.pk/pakistan-a-global-turnaround-story-ghazanfar-a-garewal/>

purpose which will not only provide them with opportunities to hone their IT skills, but at the same time provide them employment opportunities as well.

The role of Pakistan as a major provider to the UN peacekeeping mission is a proof of the country's peace building efforts. To enhance Pakistan's international standing, these efforts must also be projected appropriately.

Pakistan's image building is not only the sole job of the government, but is also responsibility of the nation, as well as organisations working for the benefit of Pakistan. A country's global profile is a projection of its internal strength. In short, it has to be a collective effort by all the stakeholders.