

THE INTERSECTION OF RELIGION AND PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

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Abstract. This research paper outlines a framework for understanding and analyzing the influence of religion on foreign policy in the context of the 'post-secular' shift in international relations. As religion becomes progressively relevant to statecraft and foreign policymaking, its impact varies significantly across various states. The primary aim of this research is to examine the influence of religion on the foreign policy choices of Pakistan and to compare these influences with those affecting India's foreign policy. By exploring these dynamics, the research seeks to uncover the possible implications for Pakistan and to identify how Pakistan can leverage religion as a tool of soft power in its statecraft methods. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on the role of religion in global politics, providing insights that could inform diplomatic strategies and international relations theory. Ultimately, the findings could help policymakers understand the nuanced ways in which religious factors shape international interactions and state behavior.

Keywords: foreign policy, religion, post-secularism, Pakistan, Islam, politics, international relations, religious influence

Basic provision

States always strategize in their efforts to attain national interest and fulfill foreign policy goals. Each state has a different set of needs and goals that it aims to achieve, and to achieve these goals states require different tools in their arsenal. In the international system, it is evident from various examples that religion influences the foreign policies of states differently, for instance, the case of China and the USA is noteworthy in this regard. The People's Republic of China considers religion as a threat to state authority which must be segregated from state affairs, whereas, to the US religious diversity means the portrayal of democratic values and liberal thought. However, policymakers interpret and use religion in foreign policy-making there seems to be a rather obvious pattern that helps categorize the relationship between religion and foreign policy into four main categories [1]. These categories constantly interact at the global level and are more accurately termed as dynamics for this study. The four main dynamics are as discussed as under.

1.1. Collision

The dynamic of collision describes the separation of the religious and the secular spheres of statecraft in the formation of the contemporary political order. This dynamic originates from the Treaty of Westphalia which formally separated the church and state in terms of both power and authority. The state maintains its authority, by controlling religion, and makes it subordinate to the state affairs. In this

way, the state is successful in preventing religious influence from taking over to an alarming extent [1]. Foreign policies of states under such a dynamic often do not concern religious matters or take them too seriously as a deciding factor.

1.2. Combination

The dynamic of combination also referred to as collusion, describes the making of a state's political culture by combining both religious and secular spheres. Such states create a form of 'Enlightened Secularism' that is not only durable but effective in ensuring the smooth functioning of statecraft [1]. Religion and State go hand in hand, cooperating to reinforce mutually agreed national interests and gain strategic advantage in ways to best achieve the state's foreign policy goals. An example of a state that works under this dynamic is the United States of America, where religion has become the symbol of citizen's freedom, acceptance, and diversity and also portrays democratic values and the Wilsonian ideals. Foreign policies of such states have an on-and-off relationship with using religion as a tool to gain interests, they may or may not use religion as a driver for foreign policy depending on the international and domestic conditions and also the party in power.

1.3. Coercion

The dynamic of coercion describes a relationship between the state and religion in a way that religious agents are targeted and forcibly excluded from both the public and political spheres by the use of violence from the state end. This relationship is usually seen in autocratic and totalitarian states rather than in democracies [2]. The state views religion as a threat to its sovereignty and seeks to eliminate it from the fabric of society within the state. An example of states under such a dynamic can be seen in China, where religious practices of all sorts are being banned unless they profit the state. The foreign policies of such states either openly condemn religion or are aggressively out to destroy it.

1.4. Co-option

The dynamic of co-option describes a relationship where the political culture of the state is rooted in the ideas, institutions, and legality of only one religious tradition amongst the various others present in a state. In this dynamic, the political culture almost wholly is influenced by religion and it is common to see the state prioritizing that specific religion over the rest. States in the Islamic world use the dynamic of co-option by using powerful majority religious traditions and producing numerous political cultures like monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, and dictatorships [3]. Foreign policies of such states are heavily influenced by the dominant religion and are openly in favor of those states that also adhere to that religion in hopes of strengthening inter-state solidarity.

Introduction

Religion has always been a primary determinant in strategic planning and state policies, and in many contexts has influenced how different cultures interpret national interest [4]. The interplay between religion and a state's foreign policy signifies one of the most recent areas of research in the study of religion's influence on both international and domestic politics. Foreign policy which can be generally described as the interests of sovereign states being exercised in the international

system, is one of the latest forefronts to consider religion as a primary driver for its working [5]. Traditionally, religion and foreign policy were studied under a binary approach where either religious or secular influence was the central determinant however this notion was reconceptualized as 'religio-secular' recognizing that the states are not situated in a binary anymore but have budged towards a more integrated approach [6]. This research also dwells on the constructivist approach that religion is a construct used by states to maximize 'special' interests in the international system. Pakistan is a state whose ideational foundation was almost entirely influenced by the religious notion of the 'Two Nation Theory'. The main aim of this study is to analyze how religion influences the foreign policy choices of Pakistan, comparing it to the relationship between religion and Indian foreign policy in hopes of ruling out the implications both have on Pakistan itself.

Description of materials and methods

Theoretical Perspectives of Religion and Foreign Policy. M. Brewster Smith proposed a map for the analysis of personality and politics which was later interpreted by Fred Greenstein to elaborate the relationship of religion and foreign policy in a theoretical perspective [7]. The map consists of six ideational boxes that represent the various factors that come into play in explaining influences on foreign policy making. Each box is linked to the other with a casual path shown by an arrow that shows that the ideas of both boxes are interlinked. Dual arrows show that the ideas of the linked boxes influence one another as well as the foreign policy of the state. Similarly, when certain features of religion are introduced into each box, the influence of religion on the foreign policy of a state can be seen.

For example, the direct link between agents and foreign policy shows the importance of the beliefs and values of state leaders in foreign policy making, if religion is introduced into their setting, then the religious perspectives and bias of leaders are translated into their foreign policy decisions. It can be hypothesized that the influence of religion is mostly in terms of transmitted knowledge, ideas, and teachings that shape the worldview for state leaders and individuals dictating in a theological sense the best course of actions to take.

Macroscopic Map of Religion and Foreign Policy

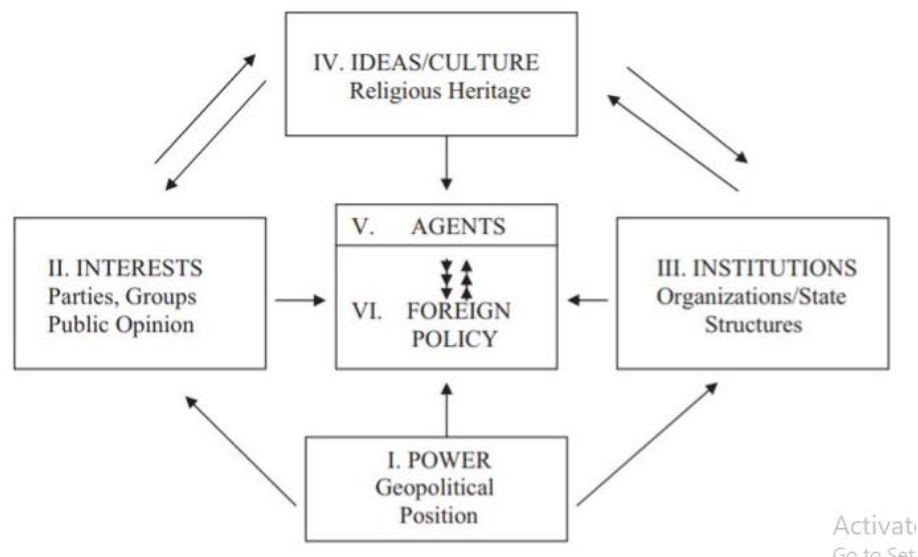


Figure 1 – Microscopic Map of religion and Foreign Policy

Results

Constructivists argue that like all ideas and behaviors, religion too can be a social and political construct. They do not argue with the existence and legitimacy of the said religions but argue that the image constructed of a religion can be highly politicized for the benefit of the state. Religion can be polished into a tool of exploitation and control over the population of a country, strengthen ties with other states in the creation of a pseudo-solidarity, and extreme cases use it as a justification of the means to an end without having proper accountability [8]. Religion is viewed as an aspect of culture, and culture as we know it primarily aids states in shaping their identities [9]. When religion is incorporated into a state's identity it can also be expected to influence the institutions made in that state and by extension determine the foreign policy goals as well.

It is also contested that religion cannot be assumed as a monolithic agent, rather it is to be regarded as a myriad of interpretations, practices, beliefs, structures, and ideas [10]. Max Weber also recorded that religious interpretations vary from country to country as they are constructed to fit in with the specific area they reach [11]. Different strands or sects of religion can also influence foreign policy outcomes within a state as the state becomes confused as to which to support in fear of offending the other and creating a conflict.

Influence on other Foreign Policy Determinants:

Whilst being a determinant itself, religion also influences other determinants of foreign policies which in turn makes its stronghold on foreign policy making even more powerful. For instance, states, whose ideational process is rooted in religion will have a religious influence on their foreign policy, similarly, religion also influences the political culture of a country and at times the type of government. Political instability especially in Muslim countries is usually on religious grounds. Historical differences on religious grounds between states could also influence the weightage of religion in the foreign policymaking of a state. Overall, the examples

are endless, but religion is one determinant that transcends into other categories all the while making its influence more apparent and unremovable.

Discussion

Influence of Religion on Pakistan's Foreign Policy. Pakistan is a state that is relatively highly influenced by religion in terms of politics and foreign policy. The ideational basis of the foundation of Pakistan too drew its roots from religion, under the 'Two Nation Theory' where the Muslims decided that they could no longer live with Hindus in a united India as both were separate nations. The relationship that religion and foreign policy have in Pakistan is the dynamic of co-option. Pakistan's political culture is rooted in the religious beliefs of the major religion of the state-Islam. Out of all other religions in the state, and even versions of Islam itself, the religion that gets representation in politics and state institutions most often is Sunni Islam [12].

Religion has always been a deciding factor in what constitutes the national interest in Pakistani politics. It forms the crux of the government in Pakistan. Shortly after independence, Pakistan assumed the identity of the 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan' which constructivists argue sent a very clear image of the role they wanted to play and the ideologies that they kept close to their heart. Throughout the history of Pakistan, there have been events or actions taken by the government that lead us to believe that religion has the dominant role in Pakistan's foreign and domestic policies, for example, the definition of Muslim as introduced in the constitution of Pakistan, which quite frankly played with the emotions of the minority Islamic sects. In the context of Pakistan, by integrating religion into all facets of the hypothetical map outlined above, we can discern the significant influence of religion on foreign policy decisions.

Power as described in the map draws its roots from the geopolitical positioning of the state and its relative position in the power structure as compared to states in its periphery. Introducing a religious influence in this sphere we see that Pakistan enjoys a prime location that is often referred to as the 'heart of the Muslim' world and in terms of relationships with other Muslim countries it is defined as the 'realm' of Islam. Pakistan also uses religious soft power for diplomatic and cordial relationships with other Muslim states and strengthens the Islamic Brotherhood. Being the only nuclear power in the Islamic world also gives Pakistan the prestige that it desires of itself as an Islamic State. Power directly influences the shaping of the interests of the state as well as the institutions that are created in it.

Interests, here, refer to the interests of various political parties, groups, the public, etc. Introducing religion in this context, we can see that various political parties have various religious priorities and narratives. Religion is often used to get votes, and build an image for political parties and leaders for example PTI government, under Prime Minister Imran Khan, vowed to make the government of Pakistan under their rule as the Government of Madinah under the rule of the Holy Prophet PBUH. Similarly, all the existing sects and various other religions inside Pakistan form their identity groups and have interests that they want to be fulfilled if the state doesn't fulfill them, such as security, representation, inclusion in government institutions, etc., and other religious groups like Maulana Fazl-ul-Haq are representations of an opposition force that has its interests to cater to in each government tenure. Religion is also used as a tool for building public opinion and playing at the sentiments of the people, most of the people of Pakistan would rather see their leaders achieve religiously commendable goals than economic or security ones [13].

Institutions are organizations or state structures that carry out the normal smooth functioning of politics collectively. Introducing religion into this context is not very bold or new as religion itself is an institution and various other institutions in the country either are influenced by religion or have the purpose for religious output e.g. Pakistan Council for Islamic Ideology, the Shariah Court, Ministry of Religious Affairs, etc. These institutions are again influenced by power and by the ideas and culture of the state. These institutions can also pass out information or output that influences the ideas and cultures of Pakistan e.g. the constitution declaring only a Muslim, that too under a very specific definition, right to the office of President and Prime Minister led to the creation of the idea or culture that Muslims, especially those who fit in that definition, were better or superior than all other religious identities present within the state [13].

The culture here refers to ideas and religious heritage. In Pakistan, Islam does play a very big role in determining the cultural practices of the state. Culture and ideas are heavily influenced by Interests and Institutions where the various public parties, groups, and organizations construct ideas that cater to their own needs and interests and introduce them to the culture of Pakistan. Under the interest of the state, the idea of Jihad was introduced in the Afghan-Soviet War where Pakistan decided to arm and train mujahideen freedom fighters to defeat the communist army in Afghanistan, as Afghanistan was a Muslim country and in essence our brothers as well as the communists being atheists and a natural enemy. The very idea led to the culture of freedom fighting, terrorism, extremism, etc. within Pakistan and Afghanistan which they have yet to get rid of [14].

Agents are by far one of the most important contributors to foreign policy, and they are primarily influenced by their ideas and perceptions of culture, but also by interests (can be personal or state-oriented) and by the output of institutions and power of a state. Agents share the most direct link with foreign policy as they are the ones who make it and hence the two spheres actively engage with each other and influence one another. Personal beliefs of leaders play a big role in determining the foreign policy outcomes of the state. In Pakistan, leadership has always had a prominent role in determining how religion was influencing government policies, and to what extent was it to be represented on the political level [15]. Different leaders had different ways of using religion e.g. Zia opted for the 'Islamization' of Pakistan whereas Musharraf was more liberal and accepting of modernization in an attempt to push the state towards development.

The last box, **foreign policy** has been clearly shown as directly being influenced by power, interests, institutions, ideas and culture, and the agents of the state. When religion is introduced as a prominent influence in any of these spheres, it is translated into the foreign policy of states in one way or another. This is simply because religion can transcend boundaries and make links on a more spiritual level and again in a country like Pakistan it is hard to remove the influence of religion from the state let alone the foreign policy goals and outcomes.

Examining the Religious Dimension of Pakistan's Foreign Policy. The pros of having religious influence over the foreign policy of Pakistan exist but are rather few as compared to the cons. Firstly, it provides a foundation for better relations amongst the Islamic States and strengthens the Muslim Brotherhood, however, other Muslim states tend to put their interest above those of the Muslim world, e.g. the OIC was created to mutually combat issues in the world faced by Islamic countries but never have they taken a stern stance on coming to Pakistan's aid when it came to the Kashmir Issue. It shapes a separate identity for the state and guides its principles and perceptions of national interest. Furthermore, if a state seriously incorporates religious influence into its foreign policy by utilizing it effectively, it can also contribute to dispelling Islamophobia globally and rectifying misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims.

On the other hand, the cons of religious influence on foreign policy are numerous. It does not in any way contest the importance and legitimacy of Islam as the best system of governance of the beliefs of any group but simply explains that

the politicized construct of religion that is used inside Pakistan is affecting the state negatively in ways that will soon be too much to handle. Firstly, it was upon religious sentiment that we took part in the Soviet-Afghan Jihad and we are still paying the price for it to this day [14]. It is because of religion that we do not recognize Israel as a state and have any relations with it, even though almost all of the Muslim world openly trades with Israel and acknowledges it. In a world where Islamic identity is greatly associated with extremism and terrorism, Pakistan as an Islamic state is somewhat lost in defining its identity and keeping it separate from the negative connotation that comes with it. Lastly, the religious dominance leads to uprisings of opposition groups, militant groups, separatist movements, and identity conflicts within the state which only increase political instability and further worsen the chances of effective foreign and domestic policy interpretation in the state.

It is noteworthy that the religious prioritization of Pakistan exhibits inherent contradictions. The country often grapples with the delicate balance between aligning itself with either Iran or Saudi Arabia, in fears of invoking a civil war by upsetting any of the major religious Islamic sects i.e. the Shi'ites and the Sunnis. The leadership of Pakistan laments violence against Muslims, yet its minorities are not safe within our borders. On the international stage, Pakistan denounces acts of violence against the Muslim world, including those perpetrated by Israel in Palestine, yet maintains a diplomatic silence on issues like China's treatment of Uighur Muslims in internment camps or Saudi Arabia's actions in Yemen [16]. Even more controversial was Pakistan's involvement in the Black September debacle in the 1970s but it would hurt its religious integrity to allow an Ahmedi or 'state proclaimed' non-Muslim to the position of governance and power.

Influence of Religion on Indian Foreign Policy. On the front, India's Foreign policy seems mostly influenced by Panchsheel. Panchsheel is an ideology of five principles of peaceful co-existence among states that is shown to be the main driver for Indian Foreign Policies. The main principles of Panchsheel include Mutual Respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states; Non-aggression among states; Non-interference in the internal matters of states; Equality and mutual benefit for all states; and, Peaceful co-existence among states.

Originally proposed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Panchsheel [17], has its roots deeper in traditional Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. India uses religion as a soft power strategy to not only improve its relationship with other states in the international system but also to drive its political campaigns. It uses religion to enhance state power, by opening up opportunities for mutual cultural development, especially in the essence of the Buddhist religion, it also uses its heritage sites and rich religious diversity for religious tourism [18]. However, the main aspect of religious influence on its foreign policy is better studied in terms of the aggressive nationalist foreign policy outlook that India has adopted in recent years.

Growing Hindu Extremist Influence in Indian Foreign Policy. Hindutva was a term first used by S.D. Savarkar in 1923, which propagated the ideology of a Hindu Nation or Rashtra based on Hinduism where Muslims were considered to be anti-national and not members of the state. Shortly after the RSS, a militant organization was also created, which worked on the notion that Hindustan was a

home for Hindus alone and Hindus and Muslims were two distinct nations. This notion of Hindutva based on a religious origin led to a change in the behavior of India towards Pakistan when the BJP came into power as compared to the Indian Congress. India too, within itself is divided between religion and secularism, and even with religion, it faces the issue of extremist ideologies [19].

Under Congress, India supported dialogue with Pakistan and bilateral relations were much better as compared to the current situation. They were open to working out problems and still effectively followed the principles of Panchsheel regarding not only Pakistan but the rest of the world itself. Congress supported the development and enlargement of SAARC and most importantly inside India, they valued all the present religions equally without giving obvious preference to a certain one as they believed in the strength of a united India.

Ever since the BJP came into power, they expressed their Hindutva ideology in almost all spheres of political work, including foreign policy. The BJP built closer relationships with the US and Israel based on shared Islamophobia and Arabism. They aimed to isolate Pakistan internationally. Within the state violence, amongst Muslims and other minority religions became more frequent and severe [20]. Minorities were being denied their rights but, at the forefront, they maintained a very well-reputed International image. Their foreign policy also showed an aggressive sense of Indian nationalism. The current actions of India in Kashmir are proof of this.

Religious Shifts in India's Foreign Policy and Implications for Pakistan.

Any religious ideologies in a governance change in India would affect the foreign policy of Pakistan. The foreign policies of the two countries are rather created about the actions of one another, with the given difference that India focuses more on the International Platform. Any new ideology in Indian power would have serious repercussions for Pakistan and Pakistan would have to formulate strategies accordingly to minimize the insecurity between the two states. For now, the BJP's Hinutva-inspired Hindu Nationalism poses a threat to Pakistan.

However, the religious diversity the exclusion of non-Hindu religions from the Indian political sphere, and the violence being used against them can play in Pakistan's favor. These religious identities that are being victimized by the BJP, especially the Christians and Sikhs along with the Muslim minorities harbor a hatred for the Hinutva as Pakistan does [21]. Strategically, Pakistan would benefit from the uprisings of such identity groups in India would cause political instability and cause people to question the legitimacy of the Indian Government which is something that Pakistan can propagate and benefit from.

One of the recent developments of the Kartarpur Corridor by Pakistan is an example of Pakistan learning from the importance that religion can give to a state in terms of strategic depth. Since International Relations is all about symbols and ideas, this gesture gave a clear message that Pakistan is treating minorities right and promoting religious diversity and shared cultural development whereas India's extremist actions in Kashmir are doing exactly the opposite.

Conclusion

Religion does play an important role in the foreign policy decisions of Pakistan. As discussed in the study above it can be both a tool and a platform for strategic depth as well as optimum utilization of state capabilities. Religion is now considered a source of a state's soft power. Pakistan can benefit a lot from this influence if it only decides whether it wants religion to play a constructive role in its foreign policy or destructive. The actual problem that Pakistan faces in terms of religion is that of religious extremism and religious opposition, Pakistan cannot expel religious control over its politics together but as constructivists argued steps can be taken to achieve moderation in the situation. Most importantly, Pakistan may be on the right track with its current engagement in the Kartarpur Corridor and other such inter-faith ventures, but it must also focus on the domestic treatment of religious minorities. Yes, any step taken in the right direction is commendable, but Pakistan will have to fix its internal issues in this regard as well. Lastly, for better policy making and implementation, it is imperative that as a state, Pakistan learns to control and utilize religious influences rather than be controlled by them.

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ДІН МЕН ПӘКІСТАННЫҢ СЫРТҚЫ САЯСИ ШЕШІМДЕРІНІҢ ҚИЫЛЫСЫ: КЕШЕНДІ ЗЕРТТЕУ

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Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеу жұмысында халықаралық қатынастардағы «постсекулярлық» өзгеріс жағдайында діннің сыртқы саясатқа әсерін түсіну және талдау негіздері көрсетілген. Дін мемлекеттік басқару мен сыртқы саясатқа қатысы күннен-күнге артып келеді, оның әсері әртүрлі штаттарда айтарлықтай өзгереді. Бұл зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты - діннің Пәкістанның сыртқы саяси таңдауына ықпал деңгейін зерттеу және оның Үндістанның сыртқы саясатына ықпал ету деңгейімен салыстыру. Осы динамиканы зерттей отырып, зерттеу Пәкістан үшін ықтимал салдарды анықтауға және Пәкістанның дінді мемлекеттік басқару әдістерінде жұмсақ күш құралы ретінде қалай пайдалана алатынын анықтауға бағытталған. Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеу дипломатиялық стратегиялар мен халықаралық қатынастар теориясын негіздей алатын ақпарат бере отырып, діннің жаһандық саясаттағы рөлі туралы кеңірек дискурсты дамытуға бағытталған. Сайып келгенде, нәтижелер саясаткерлерге діни факторлардың халықаралық өзара әрекеттесу мен мемлекеттің мінез-құлқын қалыптастырудың нәзік тәсілдерін түсінуге көмектесуі мүмкін.

Тірек сөздер: сыртқы саясат, дін, постсекуляризм, Пәкістан, ислам, саясат, халықаралық қатынастар, діни ықпал

ВЗАИМОСВЯЗЬ РЕЛИГИИ И ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ РЕШЕНИЙ ПАКИСТАНА: КОМПЛЕКСНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ

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Аннотация. В этой исследовательской работе излагаются основы для понимания и анализа влияния религии на внешнюю политику в контексте «постсекулярного» сдвига в международных отношениях. По мере того, как религия становится все более актуальной для государственного управления и выработки внешней политики, ее влияние значительно варьируется в разных государствах. Основная цель этого исследования - изучить влияние религии на внешнеполитический выбор Пакистана и сравнить это влияние с теми, которые влияют на внешнюю политику Индии. Изучая эту динамику, авторы исследования стремятся раскрыть возможные последствия для Пакистана и определить, как Пакистан может использовать религию в качестве инструмента мягкой силы в своих методах государственного управления. Кроме того, это исследование призвано внести вклад в более широкий дискурс о роли религии в глобальной политике, предоставив информацию, которая может стать основой для дипломатических стратегий и теории международных отношений. В конечном счете, полученные результаты могут помочь политикам понять нюансы того, как религиозные факторы влияют на международные взаимодействия и поведение государств.

Ключевые слова: внешняя политика, религия, постсекуляризм, Пакистан, ислам, политика, международные отношения, религиозное влияние

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