

# **Saudi Arabia-Iran Rivalry: Implications for Pakistan's Foreign Policy (2015-2021)**

## **Introduction**

Saudi Arabia and Iran were considered to be traditional rivals historically, but with the commercialization of the world, this rivalry had increased and intensified in many ways over the last few decades. Many countries in the world had been affected by this rivalry specially the countries that are geo-strategically situated around the borders of Iran, for instance Afghanistan, Turkey, and Pakistan. Although the protracted enmity was said to have its roots in religious sectarianism, it has transcended into all the fields like economy, oil trade, foreign policy, political influence and power imbalance in the region.

The conventional narrative of Saudi Iranian relations, which was based on the ideological separation of Saudi Arabia and Iran, indicates that increased Sunni-Shia strains throughout the Middle East should be a substantial element in the strategic calculations of either government. In addition to sectarian religious ideologies, racial differences also highlight the differences between Arabs and Persians. These structural flaws undoubtedly impact Saudi Arabia's and Iran's relations, but such special variations make both parts complexes. The ideological faction was a very important element in shaping the politics of both countries. Rather, according to the literature, ideologies act as calculating weapons of state policy and as a collection of deeply held convictions held by a small number of influential voters that authorities must consider when formulating their policies.<sup>1</sup>

The conflict and instability in the region had been significantly influenced by the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, the mainstream media frequently oversimplifies this rivalry's political origins. Like this, much of the publications on political identity in the Saudi- Iran conflict focuses on how certain individuals had politicized and manipulated Shia and Sunni Islam in their power warfare, as well as a thorough and descriptive account of the rivalry's history and the present, as well as racial and religious identities serving as causes and origins for regional instability.

The belligerence between the two powerful neighbors is categorized by cold war and fierce struggle for regional dominance primarily in the regions of Yemen, Syria and other GCC

---

<sup>1</sup> M. Ihsan Q and M. Saifur R, Saudi-Iranian Rivalry in the Middle East: Implications for Pakistan, Pakistan Horizon; Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 69, No. 4 (October 2016)

countries. Historically, all of this was upended in 1979 when an uprising occurred in Iran and a new revolutionary theocracy took birth that had the ambitions to spread beyond its borders and influence other areas in all respects including trade, beliefs, politics and economy. Nonetheless a Shiite-Sunni sectarian rivalry intensified after this revolution sharpening the gulf between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The sectarian differences between Sunnis and Shias and Arab-Iran diversities were extremely provoked after Iran's revolution of 1979 as according to the Arabs, Iran aspired to spread its revolution among the regional leaders and other nations in this region particularly Arab Persian Gulf countries were scared of the possible revolts. Such divisions and fear of the spreading Iranian revolution particularly created the regional security complex. The particular complex nature of the security concerns also created complications for foreign policy of Pakistan having close and friendly relations with both the main competitors in the region.

Although Saudi Arabia and Iran were traditionally rival to each other, but this rivalry had been intensified over the last few decades and some of other countries, including Pakistan, have also been affected by the disputation. Last fifteen (15) years are of great importance as in these years, Saudi Arabia and Iran's dispute got worst due to series of events leading to further tense environment in whole of the region. In 2003, the US government invaded Iraq and overthrew the government of Saddam Hussain, who was a prominent Sunni leader and a major adversary of Iran. Subsequently, Shia government was formed in Baghdad and hence Iranian influence have been on the rise ever since. The year 2011, saw the Arab spring wherein, the Arab peninsula was in turmoil and the governments were toppled. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia found it as a chance to broaden their influence, particularly in Syria, Iraq, and Libya

While considering the context of Saudi Iranian relations and to understand how each state had traditionally viewed its place in the indigenous order and shaped its programs consequently, it can be said that though the two countries had never been involved in any direct conflict or war, yet their proxy wars had always been active and propagated throughout the Middle Eastern countries to gain power and influence. In such situation Pakistan finds itself at crucial point where it not only has to maintain its relationships with both the countries but also to strengthen them.

The study assumes over the past forty years, the geopolitical competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran have gotten worse. This conflict for local influence between Sunni political power

headed by Saudi Arabia and Shia political power led by Iran had emerged from these deep sectarian differences and Arab-Persian ethnic groupings led by Saudi Arabia and Iran.<sup>2</sup> The security situation in the Middle East was directly and indirectly related to hostilities Iran and Saudi Arabia are adjacent. Within this context, the security environment in the Middle East bears witness to a strategic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran in various conflicts, including proxy wars and Iran nuclear program. It may be possible that if Saudi Arabia and Iran worked together based on the number of problems, along with Yemen and Syria borderlands, the region's security would be much improved.

In addition, the Middle Eastern internal weakness towards Saudi Arabia and Iran strategic hostility had created opportunities for intervention by external forces that have further aggravated conflicts in the region. Additionally, world powers including the US, EU and Russia were key players supporting each side and responding to events accordingly. According to the study, Iran and Saudi Arabia would build a cooperative partnership as a result of the Middle East security crisis. In this regard, the two nations recent efforts to cooperate may be beneficial for Middle Eastern security.<sup>3</sup>

Conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran had an impact on other countries in addition to complicating the situation in the region including Pakistan in the broader perspective. It is important to examine the implications of the Saudi Iran Rivalry on Foreign policy of Pakistan maintaining a balanced approach towards both of the Middle Eastern countries. Foreign policy of Pakistan having close ties with both Saudi Arabia and Iran had limited options due to the extremely hostile bilateral relations between these two rivals. In the severe differences and hostile relations between Arabia Saudi and Iran, it is exceedingly challenging for Pakistan to achieve equilibrium under these conditions by ignoring interests of both of the countries in the region. This research dissertation examines how ideological and racial divisions and power struggle to dominate the region between Saudi Arabia and Iran has created tough grounds for Pakistan's foreign policy maintaining a balanced approach towards these two rival countries in the time frame of 2015-2021.

---

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Ramani, "Pakistan's Role in the Syria Conflict," *The Diplomat*, August 24, 2016. Accessed on 14 April 2022. [Pakistan's-role-in-the-Syria-conflict](#).

<sup>3</sup> Azeem Gul and Rizwana. K. Abbasi, "Iran and Saudi Arabia's Strategic Rivalry and the Middle Eastern Security: An Assessment," *Liberal Art social sciences International Journals (LASSI)*, vol 5, Published Year 2021, 5.2.2

Pakistan holds security, economic and political stakes vis-à-vis its foreign policy towards both the countries. Pakistan is in a dilemmatic situation as one is the immediate neighbor (Iran) and the other is an old ally and friend (Saudi-Arabia). This time period is crucial because Saudi Arabia will start a military campaign in 2015 to back its preferred regime in Yemen. Riyadh asserts that the airstrikes are in retaliation for Iran's assistance of the Houthis, a Zaydi Shiite organization that in 2014 seized control of a sizable portion of Saudi Arabia's neighboring country.

Even though, a month after a Saudi-led coalition engaged in the war by carrying out airstrikes against the Houthi rebels, Pakistan's parliament announced in April 2015 that it will maintain its neutrality in the Yemeni crisis, attacks by Houthi rebels on various parts of Saudi Arabia are typically condemned by Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> This type of policy adopted by government of Pakistan has been continued in the coming years including year 2021 Syrian war was also among other important developments affecting Pakistan's foreign policy toward the region in this time period of 2015-2022. In the Syrian crisis, in which Saudi Arabia and Iran have once again pursued their conflicting interests in the war-torn country, Pakistan officially promoted its non-aggressive role during the crisis and once again embraced a policy of neutrality. According to a section of the digital media, the non-violent attitude of Pakistani government with Al-Asad's regime caused the Saudi Arabia, which had repeatedly called for overthrowing the Syrian regime, to distance itself from Islamabad in favor of closer ties with India.<sup>55</sup> Later on, it was very difficult for Pakistan to repair and rebuild its brotherly relations with Saudi Arabia.

Similarly, Pakistan also was in trouble at the time of a new alliance of Turkey-Iran-Malaysia appeared in the Islamic world. There were reports in the media as a result of a foreign policy decision made by Pakistan, they will no longer be eligible for new work visas from the United Arab Emirates starting in 2020. According to a report, after trying to align itself with a Turkey Iran-Malaysia bloc opposing Saudi Arabia's leadership of the Muslim world, Islamabad lost favor with Gulf states.

Since 2015, Pakistan witnessed a number of the events that conflict in its ties with Saudi Arabia and Iran under the leadership of Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. The implications of Saudi-Iranian rivalry on Pakistan's foreign policy from 2015 to 2021 are significant to elucidate for future

---

<sup>4</sup> ADNAN AAMIR, "Pakistanis pay price as Islamabad joins Turkey-Iran-Malaysia bloc," Nikkei Asia, December 4, 2020. Accessed on 14 April 2022. Politics, International-relations, Pakistanis-pay-price- as Islamabad-joins-Turkey-Iran-Malaysia-bloc.

prospects of Pakistan's foreign policy since both the countries are now in the phase of rapprochement by Chinese efforts.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Saudi Arabia and Iran hold a history of rival relations due to their ideological strife and geopolitical concerns that pushed both the countries into a battle of hegemony over the region. The non-cordial nature of Saudi-Iran relations (2015-2021) have bilateral as well as regional Implications. The complex Saudi-Iran rivalry has caused implications for Pakistan. Pakistan, being a neighbor of Iran and a diplomatic friend of Saudi Arabia remain in dilemmatic situation to balance its foreign relations with both the countries. This research aims at examining the nature of Saudi-Iran relationship and how it evolved over the time. The most significant part of this research dissertation is to examine Pakistan's foreign policy towards both Iran and Saudi-Arabia, vis-à-vis their rival relationship. The research in the prism of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) highlights the implications that Pakistan faced due to Saudi-Iran rival relationship.

### **Research Objectives**

The research aims at:

- ✓ Examining the genesis of Saudi-Iran Confrontational Relations.
- ✓ Investigating reasons/factors and patterns of Saudi-Iran historical Rivalry
- ✓ Examining Pakistan's foreign Policy towards both Iran and Saudi Arabia
- ✓ Analyzing the impact of Saudi-Iran rivalry on Pakistan's Foreign policy

### **Literature Review**

The literature review which is a crucial element of the research, describes how the proposed investigation is related to prior study. It shows the originality and relevance of the research problem by identifying the gap in the literature. Review of the literature on this topic found that the existing literature has been concentrating generally on various aspects of the subject but there is less focus on impact of ideological divisions and security concerns on Pakistan's foreign policy of Saudi Arabia and Iran. While some academics acknowledged the negative effects of the adversarial relations among Saudi Arabia and Iran but was unable to identify the true cause of the phenomenon

and its complicated impact on Pakistan. For instance, the author Arhama Siddiqi in an article describes, the friendly relationship that Pakistan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations have.<sup>6</sup> These relations were primarily based on religion but have since expanded to include strategic and economic ties as well. The article mentioned how the administration of Former Prime Minister Imran Khan in Pakistan discussed resetting its relations with crucial Middle Eastern partners and Pakistan, according to the Prime Minister, would act as a healer in the Middle East. Pakistan appears to be following a strategy of improving ties with all nations, particularly those in the Middle East. In the end, Pakistan's economy is in desperate need of financial help can't be ignored for this new dedication to strengthen Middle East relation as GCC's (Gulf Cooperation Council) rich countries are pretty much capable of assisting and helping Pakistan. According to the study, maintaining balanced relations with all of the Middle Eastern governments, particularly Iran and Saudi Arabia, presents the Pakistani government with significant diplomatic hurdles. Iran is seen by Pakistan, which has strong ideological and military links with Saudi Arabia, as a prospective commercial partner as well as a neighbor.

Similarly, another piece of the literature termed balancing Pakistan's policy towards middle east as one of biggest diplomatic challenges for the country. According to Riaz Khokhar, it is biggest challenge for Pakistan in its interactions with Saudi Arabia and Iran, Pakistan should maintain balance. and maintain a neutral position in the ongoing intense rift between the two countries.<sup>7</sup> The author who held higher positions in the Pakistani diplomatic missions outlined those relations with Saudi Arabia is very important for Pakistan heavily dependent on Saudi Arabia for its economic aid and energy resources. The author added that strong Saudi ties with the US is also important for Pakistan. According to another author Huma Yusuf, the core of Pakistan's Middle East strategy is a delicate balance among Iran and Saudi Arabia. Its challenge is to maintain the deep military, economic and strong diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia along with having decent economic and counterterrorism relations with Iran. Sometime, Pakistan face difficulty and try to be a neutral actor in the context as the author gives an example of an event when Pakistan's parliament decided not to support Saudi Arabia's military actions in Yemen in 2015. That was clear proof according to the literature about how Pakistan wanted to stay neutral in the Middle East and balance its diplomacy between the conflicts happening.

---

<sup>6</sup> Arhama Siddiqi, "Pakistan's Relations with the Middle East in the Era of Imran Khan," *Asia Dialogue*, (2019) 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Riaz. Khokhar, "Pakistan's Diplomatic Challenges in the Middle East," *Centre for International Strategic Studies*, (2018). 1-2.

Another author Yaqoob ul Hassan realizes that the diplomatic challenges of Pakistan in this region are getting tougher with time as the Saudi-Iran cold war is becoming more heated with the US being involved as well putting fresh sanctions on Iran. <sup>8</sup>The author underlined that Pakistan under no cost can afford to lose Saudi Support but at the same time, Pakistan also cannot afford to have a policy against Iran either since having good peaceful relations with this bordering neighbor, even these ties are extremely important for successful of the CPEC game changing projects. <sup>9</sup>

According to Moonis Ahmer, Saudi Arabia and Iran have both aided and abetted their respective ideological factions in the area. While Saudi Arabia has backed the Sunni sect to oppose Iran's policies pertaining to Shias, Iran has been perceived as aiding Shias in the region. As a result, radical activity in the area has its roots in the race. It is noteworthy that Pakistan was impacted by the ideological conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The author describes the complications Pakistan's foreign policy faced due to regional rivalry of both Saudi Arabia and Iran. <sup>10</sup>

Goraya and Mazhar in their article on 'The Politico-Ideological Rivalry of Iran and Saudi Arabia Post Islamic Revolution: Impacts on Pakistan' said that Pakistan was unable to equally fortify its relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran or neutralize them during the US-Saudi-Iran triangular relationship. According to the authors, the confusion between Iran, Saudi Arabia and USA created a tense situation for Pakistan to balance its neutral foreign policy towards each of them creating a complex situation. Saudi Arabia's and the US' dissatisfaction with Pakistan-Iran relations further demanded Pakistan to be vigilant on its Iran policy because of the Indian increased diplomatic engagement with Iran. For example, in opposition to the fact that Pakistan had a high energy demand, it was able to meet it. However, it is regrettable to report that the US and Saudi Arabian governments were against the Iran-Pakistan (IP) Gas Pipeline. <sup>11</sup>

In a 2014 interview with Live Encounters Magazine, Dr. Carol Kersten cites yet another instance of sectarian cooperation in the Abbasid Caliphate in Bagdad, wherein Shia ministers supported Sunni Caliphs like the Buwayhid family, who were crucial patrons and sponsors of education and culture at the court. <sup>12</sup> Furthermore, in South Asia, Sunni Mughal Sultans ruled over Delhi at the same time that their semi-autonomous Shia vassals lived close by in Lucknow.

---

<sup>8</sup> H. Yusuf, "Pakistan in the Middle East: A Cautious Balance," *The Diplomat* (2017). *International studies* 38, 57-74

<sup>9</sup> Hassan, "PAKISTAN'S MIDDLE EAST GAMBLE. *South Asian Voices-Regional Affairs*," Y.A (2017).

<sup>10</sup> Moonis, A. (2008). *Sectarian conflicts in Pakistan*. *Pakistan Vision*, 9(1), 17

<sup>11</sup> Mazhar, M. S., & Goraya, N. S. (2013). *Challenges in Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline*. *NDU Journal*, 27, 163-178.

<sup>12</sup> Kalin, M., & Siddiqui, N. (2014). *Religious Authority and the Promotion of Sectarian Tolerance in Pakistan* (Vol. 21): US Institute of Peace.

Furthermore, according to Lipka (2014), the majority of Muslims prefer to refer to themselves as "Muslims," as is the case in Kazakhstan and Indonesia, and do not identify themselves by belonging to a particular sect or even considering the differences between Sunni and Shia Islam to be significant.<sup>13</sup>

There have been recent instances of Sunni and Shia unity throughout certain times. In the evolution of ties between the two sects in Iraq, for instance, key events are highlighted by Kirmanj (2013). There were indications of cooperation, such as showing up to each other's religious events, when Sunnis and Shias united to oppose the British mandate over Iraq in the 1920s. Sunnis commemorated the death of Imam Hussein, while Shias went to Sunni festivities of the prophet Mohammed's birth day. Yet another instance of sectarian cooperation during the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq is brought up by Gettleman (2004), who notes that both sects denounced the invasion and organized armed groups to oppose the coalition troops commanded by the United States.

The literature deeply fascinated to discover the motives and elements in the back of the current political unrest in Middle East with particular reference of hostile relations of Saudi Arab and Iran, the two main determinants of the politics in Middle East. This has been also verified that their relations have become intensified after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Both states have by no means faced militarily however they divided the entire location primarily based totally on political ideology. Many academics talk about this argument as a "Cold War." Both nations frequently made an effort to compete in the international oil market and for political influence in the Persian Gulf and Levant. The religious and ideological rift in conjunction with different elements inclusive of sectarianism, nationalism, modern ideology, opposition over nearby hegemony, oil exports towards U.S. and foreign navy presence withinside the gulf encircle an opposition among Saudi Arabia and Iran which affects their overseas guidelines in addition to their bilateral relations.<sup>14</sup>

According to the assertion made in the book "Iran Rivalry with Saudi Arabia" by German author Hanner Fürtig the ongoing conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia, one of the Gulf Wars, demonstrates how Iran's future conduct will be influenced by what western nations do. Iran-US relations are the key factor determining Iran's future direction. A British author named Peter

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> F. Humayun, "Pakistan's Middle East Problem," The South Asia Channel, (2015)



Calvocoressi wrote about how superpowers like the US and USSR were involved in the historical events of the Gulf in his book "World politics 1945-2000." The author claimed that, with the exception of Iran, the Middle East has been governed by a bipolar system since Gamal Abdel Nasser's death in 1970. The performance of economic sanctions was initially demonstrated by the Arab oil exporters. Therefore, America's role in Middle Eastern politics, which is typically regarded as the key region in global politics, cannot be disregarded.

The Literature also covers influence of Iran and Saudi Arabia disagreements on Pakistan on the broader perspective but most of the literature concentrated on the Saudi Arabia and Iran difference and conflicting concerns. There is less focused on the implications of the Saudi Iran Rivalry on Foreign policy of Pakistan maintaining a Balance Approach towards both of the Middle Eastern countries. Foreign policy of Pakistan having close ties with both Saudi Arabia and Iran has limited options due to the extremely hostile bilateral relations between these two rivals. Therefore, Implications of the Saudi Arabia and Iran Rivalry for Foreign Policy of Pakistan is considered as a gap in the Study.

### **Research Gap:**

There is a lot of literature available on the said topic related to the historical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Also, many books, articles and academic research is published on Pakistan's relations with Iran or with Saudi Arabia. I feel a less academic work published on the triangular complex relations between Iran-Pakistan and Saudi Arabia from a foreign policy stand point. This research shall also contribute towards the challenges and options Pakistan's foreign policy have to balance its foreign policy towards both the states as both are significant for Pakistan's political and economic interests.

### **Core Argument**

The paradoxical relations between Saudi-Arabia and Iran have created complexities for Pakistan to pursue a neutral approach towards Saudi Arabia and Iran and to craft a balanced foreign policy towards both the countries.

### **Research Questions**

This study has attempted to investigate the following questions:

1. Why Saudi-Arabia and Iran holds a rival historical Relationship?
2. How Pakistan maintained its foreign relations with Saudi-Arabia?

3. What was Pakistan's foreign policy towards Iran?
4. How Saudi-Iran rival relations impact on Pakistan's foreign policy?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The regional security complex theory (RSCT) is the most effective perspective through which to analyze the dynamics of the Saudi-Iran rivalry and its consequences for Pakistan's foreign policy. The regional dynamics of the post-Cold War Regional Politics are best explained by this theory, which was put forth by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver.<sup>15</sup> It concentrates on the regional security risks that the majority of its competitive surrounding governments experience, leading to constant security issues that require the most resources. These nations together make up a security complex in a particular area that has related security problems. The theory assumes that a group of states whose national security interests are intertwined cannot be dealt separately.<sup>16</sup> The author calls it security interdependence. This interdependence, the authors say is very critical and imperative to explain the security and interests of any single country and the security issues of these countries cannot be defined or resolved in isolation. In case of Iran, Saudi-Arabia and Pakistan, they possess a complex security framework where one state's action is affecting the other state's policies.<sup>17</sup> Iranian Shite outlook and their sectarian ties with shite community in Pakistan is a risk to Pakistan's national security vis-à-vis sectarian fault lines exists. Likewise, Pakistan and Saudi-Arabia had been US ally in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Pakistan with the financial support from Sunni-Saudi Arabia and military and strategic support by US, facilitated to raise Taliban in Afghanistan. Pakistan's security architecture is at flame of this sectarian strife from both Shite community and Saudi-led Wahhabi groups on its soil.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Saudi-Arabia had been a good financial support for Pakistan in time of need. A large number of Pakistani oversees reside and work in Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's tilt towards Iran distant Saudi Arabia from Pakistan as Saudi Arabia and Iran are the regional rival. Another significant complicated factor in Saudi-Iran Pakistan relations is USA. US is apprehensive of Iran and its Nuclear development and had been laying sanctions against Iran pushing international community

---

<sup>15</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wver, Security; A new framework of analysis, Jaap de Wilde, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998

<sup>16</sup> Buzan B, People state and fear: An agenda for international security studies in the post-cold war era; Review of International studies; 24(2), 1983

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

to distant from Iran.<sup>19</sup> This isolation to Iran and Pakistan's negligence to Iran as the most immediate neighbor increase the security threat for Pakistan's border with Iran in Baluchistan province. On the other, India always tried to manipulate this disenfranchised nature of Pak-Iran relations and tried to exploit the fault lines between Pakistan and Iran. Talking about the regional geopolitical framework of the Middle East, the Saudi Iran rivalry has created implication for the regional countries who remain surrounded into civil wars backed by either of the country. Therefore, the paradox of their relationship (Pakistan-Iran Saudi-Arabia) has created a complex regional security environment effecting each other's security apparatus. The ties between Pakistan and Iran have changed throughout time. Bilateral security concerns, strategic objectives, changes in both countries' political identities, and other factors have all influenced how the two neighbors relate to one another. The complicated and tumultuous relationship has been made more complicated by Iran's security arrangement with India and Pakistan's close ties to Saudi Arabia.<sup>20</sup> Their differing views on public security have influenced the two countries' foreign policy perspectives on the region in recent decades.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is qualitative. It comprises on historical and descriptive analysis of Saudi-Iran relations and its impact on the region and neighboring states. The data collection includes mainly the secondary data sources including books, articles in journals, newspaper articles, and the online sources of information. However, at some instances, the official documents and statements are also consulted as Primary data through official websites. The research applies the qualitative method to examine different chains of the events and comparative method to compare the different periods and phases between Saudi Arabia and Iran relations.

### **Significance of the Study**

The nature of Pak-Iran-Saudi triangle is a really complex one due to the fact Saudi Arabia and Iran had been discovered in ideological conflict in Middle East. Iran has been energetic in Promoting Shi'ism in Muslim states which has been significantly hostile and countered through Saudi Arabia having Sunni Islamic ideology. Pakistan and Iran have sectarian clash over promoting sectarian violence in Pakistan. What hurt Iran the maximum turned into the inclination that Pakistan

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

closer to Saudi Arabia and US with inside the decade of 1980. No doubt, Pakistan hosts a wide variety of Shia community who've near hyperlinks with Iran. Considering the geographical proximity, geo-politico-monetary requirements in their bilateral members of the family and socio-cultural association of citizens of Iran and Pakistan, the bilateral strife between both Iran and Pakistan is critical for Pakistan's foreign policy.

Likewise, Pakistan's closer ties with Saudi Arabia alien Iran from its neighbor Pakistan with a suspicious security view. On the other, Saudi Arabia is also a priority for Pakistan's foreign policy. This complex scenario, create implications for Pakistan to balance its neutral approach both towards Iran and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this examine is significant to find out the challenges and prospects to Pakistan's foreign policy on Saudi Arabia and Iran. This study is also significant as the estrangement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is a challenge to Pakistan positive relationships with the Middle Eastern countries as Pakistan can't afford to take positions in the Middle East on the one hand. On the other, the growing Iran-India diplomatic relations are a security apprehension for Pakistan too. Thus, this study is an attempt to highlight the to examine the Implications of Saudi Arab-Iran Rivalry for Pakistan's Foreign Policy along with recommending potential diplomatic strategies that Pakistan can use in the Middle East to maintain its neutral position and interest without offending the opposite parties for the larger regional and international peace.

### **Delimitation**

This research study is framed into the time period from 2015-2021. Though, Saudi Arabia and Iran have entered into a phase of rapprochement and agreed to restore the ties through opening diplomatic platforms in each other's country with the diplomatic efforts made by China. This ice-melting is done through China who saw it in the larger geo-economic and geo-political interests of both Saudi Arabia and Iran and the rest of the globe too. But this research dissertation will remain focused within the time limit of (2015-2021). There are two reasons for this timeframe; First, Saudi-Iran rapprochement is the recent development and uncertain, which still has to pass through many phases to reach to a cordial diplomatic relationship. when I started my research, still Saudi-Arabia held rival relations. Second, the new ties are yet to be progressed. Saudi-Arabia and Iran have a complicated bilateral history. The current move of restoration is very hopeful; however, it will require a sufficient time to repair the old damages and to be on the normal path of friendly bilateral relations.

## **Organization of the Study**

The thesis comprised on five chapters covering both the dimension of the research; the historical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and; Pakistan's difficulties to maintain the balanced relations with both the rivals.

The overview/history of Saudi-Iranian relations is described in the **First chapter, 'Overview of Saudi Arabia-Iran Relations'** narrates the historical relationship of Saudi-Arabia and Iran. It expresses the background of their bilateral relations over the period of time. It deals with the factor that led both the countries to go rival and anti to each other.

The **second chapter, 'Complexities of Saudi-Iran Bilateral Relations'**. This chapter talks about various factors and reasons that caused the two Middle Eastern powers anti to each other. However, this relationship is not only based on theological differences. Significant factors include multiethnicity, Arab vs Persian dominance, and differences in the interests of regional and international parties.

The **third chapter, 'Pakistan Relations with Saudi Arabia'** deals with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan's foreign policy. In this chapter I discussed Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have maintained friendly ties since the two countries formation in 1947. The friendship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is exceptional, and they are always willing to help each another. A couple of the facets of this alliance include investment commitments and economic cooperation. This devotion spans the military, political, and strategic spheres. Saudi Arabia anticipates more military cooperation from Pakistan, especially because of the impending dangers in the Middle East.

The **chapter four** is about, **'Pakistan Foreign policy towards Iran'**. This chapter describes the nature of Iran and Pakistan's relationship. It elaborates that both the countries have a tumultuous history and has seen significant change throughout time. There are now several challenges to keep Pakistan and Iran in good times. Furthermore, Pakistan and Iran have not yet realized their full economic potential despite being near neighbors. The study attempts to examine the economic ties and trade potential between the two nations. It also elaborates the sectarian issue between Pakistan and Iran. Because Iran's Shia community has ties with Pakistan's Shia community in Baluchistan and other province. The unhealthy relations between Iran and Pakistan gave India and Afghanistan an opportunity to exploit the fault line. the study is then concluded with an analysis.

The **chapter five** discusses the **'Implications of Saudi-Arabia and Iran Rivalry for Pakistan's Foreign Policy'** from the period 2015-2021. The study makes the case that Pakistan supports this discourse due to a confluence of geopolitical, geographic, and demographic circumstances and that Pakistan cannot be

ignorant due to its stronger defense, economic, and cultural links with Saudi Arabia on one hand and regional, economic and sectarian linkages with Iran on the other.

## Chapter 1:

### An Overview of Saudi Arabia-Iran Relations

#### 1.1 Introduction

A Saudi-Iranian Friendship Treaty was signed in 1929, which led to the two countries establishing diplomatic ties. The two sides ties were cordial until 1943, when the Saudi regime murdered an Iranian pilgrim named Abu Talib Yazdi for reportedly vomiting on the Kaaba. "States can always govern the global community, despite everything. The guiding principles of the world were justice, ethics, and reason. These had global sway. People who carry out violent acts did not dominate the world." Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, King. Ibn Saud, the monarch of Saudi Arabia, wrote the Shah of Iran in 1946 to reestablish diplomatic ties, which led to the revival of the two countries mutual relations. Relationships did not become active until the 1960s, primarily because of disparities in religious beliefs and Iran's recognition of Israel. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia visited Iran in 1966 with the intention of fostering even closer ties between the two nations. A subsequent formal visit by Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, to Saudi Arabia resulted in a peaceful settlement of the islands<sup>21</sup>. The Shah actively helped to build international Islamic organizations such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Muslim World League, and the Organization of the Islamic World Congress and supported King Faisal's attempts to promote Islamic unity.

A demarcation agreement was struck between Saudi Arabia and Iran in 1968. In the late 1960s, when the United Kingdom said it would leave the Persian Gulf, Iran and Saudi Arabia assumed control of the region's peace and security. In a series of letters to King Faisal in the late 1960s, the Shah begged him to modernize Saudi Arabia, writing, "Please, my brother, modernize.<sup>22</sup> Unlock your nation. Men and women should attend the same schools. Embrace the miniskirt on women. possess discos. Be current. Otherwise, I can't promise that you'll keep your throne. King Faisal responded by writing, "Your Majesty, I appreciate your counsel. Please remember that you are not the French Shah. The Elysée is not where you are. You're in Iran. Muslim people comprise 90%

---

<sup>21</sup> Gary Sick, 2004, Wehrey, Frederic; Karasik, Theodore W; Nader, Alireza; Ghez, Jeremy J; Hansell, Lydia; Guffey, Robert A. (2009). Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation and Implication for US Policy. RAND Corporation, 14 November 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Greville, Charles; The Two Sides of Women. The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842- 2003

of your population. Please don't forget that.<sup>23</sup>

Saudi Arabia's the administrator worries about Iran in the 1970s focused on two things: first, Iran's military modernization and its control throughout the region. Second, Iran's retaking of the islands of Big Tunb, Little Tunb, and Abu Moussa in 1971 contradicted the United Arab Emirates' assertion regarding the relations with Saudi Arabia. But there was never a time when relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia were as cordial as they were between 1968 and 1979.<sup>24</sup>

In the middle to late 1970s, there were some problems in the two nations relationship. The Saudis fought the Shah's attempts to establish an Iranian security infrastructure in the area. Instead, King Khalid made an effort to establish long-lasting bilateral security ties with the smaller neighboring Persian Gulf governments. Additionally, the Saudis convinced for more moderate price rises from OPEC in 1976 and 1977 than Iran desired.

Major producers of gas and oil, the two nations had a tense relationship when it comes to energy policy. Saudi Arabia has a higher motivation to take a long-term approach to the global oil market and a larger incentive to moderate prices due to its enormous oil reserves and smaller population. In contrast, Iran's vast population, recent sanctions following a decade-long war with Saddam's Iraq, and low standard of living are forcing it to concentrate on high pricing in the short term.

Saudi Arabia was a significant provider of funding to rebel organizations, while Iran supported the Syrian government militarily and with billions of dollars in aid during the civil war in Syria. Both nations had accused one another of aiding terrorists. Saudi Arabia and Iran was both involved in the struggle for regional domination. The pre-Saudi era must also be discussed in light of the current rivalry between the two countries. Studying the Ottoman Empire's history in particular is essential. "As long as the civil war, supported and encouraged by Iranians and Russians, continues, Syria were remain a hotbed of terrorism."<sup>25</sup>

### **1.1 Iranian-Saudi relations during the Shah's reign**

The Al-Saud line, which restored the ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran, was developed in 1928, occurring as a result of King Faysal's collapse in adjacent Iraq in 1958.<sup>26</sup> Concerns about

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid



increase after the nationalist administration overthrew the chief. the possibility of more democratic revolutionaries who didn't want monarchical governments in the environment.<sup>27</sup> As a result, "Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi and the Saudi Kings Sa'ud, particularly Faysal at his overtaking Power in 1964, initiated pattern of ordinary talks to establish their territorial Procedures," which increased the relative strength of the two State-level families. In order to ensure a consistent supply of fuel and oil, as well as to increase wealth through trade with Iran and Saudi Arabia until the end of the 1970s, Henner Furtig illustrates "the everyday enthusiasm for struggling with communist and radical-patriot impacts in the Gulf area." Before the [Iranian] insurgency,<sup>28</sup> the crucial political assembly in the Gulf, according to David Long, "became neither Sunni-Shiite nor Arab-Persian but Traditionalist radical." However, despite the initial success of the Saudi-Iranian correlation, cordial and warm relations between nations were no longer intended to end because the removal of the Shah in 1979 offered a magnificent opportunity despite the difficult Modern condition of monarchical guidance issues in several governments throughout the region, progress in Iranian foreign policy undermined al-Saud legitimacy.

## **1.2 The Iranian Revolution and the Iraqi War**

Sha's collapse in the middle of 1979 led to a change in Saudi Iranian relations. The realization of the change spoke to everything that the Shah and the al-Saud family had unitedly opposed. The Saudi-Iranian relationship collapsed after the 1979 conflict, prompting a breakup in reconciling relationships in 1988. Despite a religious disagreement, "Saudi-Iranian relations had been similarly tense after there was no direct proof that Tehran was involved in the incident, the 1979 Mecca Grand Mosque seizure. Riyadh supported Iraq financially and politically as a result of their disagreements over Iran funding Iraq 40 billion US dollars to strengthen its military. The GCC Secretary-General declared in 1982 that "Iran's challenge for amazingness in the Gulf changed into the crucial danger to the strength of the GCC." Abdullah Bishara.<sup>29</sup> The threat that Bishara portrayed was summed up in Saudi Arabia's concerns about Iran intimidating its government in order to disrupt local disputes, such as those with Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE, as examples, and continuing to engage in with Iran. As the conflicts between Iran and Iraq intensified, Saudi Arabia employed financial pressure tactics to

---

<sup>27</sup> Tayris; I.B. Al-Saud, Faisal Bin Salman. Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf: Power Politics in Transition 1968-1971. London: 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ramazani, R. K, The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis (University Press of Virginia, 1988)

place an equal load on Iran. Iran-Saudi Arabia relations may continue to deteriorate because of Saudi Arabia's potential to had an impact on oil prices in a dramatic way. Saudi-Iranian sports experience their lowest point ever in the wake of the Mecca incident in 1987. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review (PSSR)*, September 2020, volume 4, issue III 591. By declaring that "it would no longer permit the Haj to be "abused by Any kingdom or bunch for political advantage," it emphasizes its model. The disaster in Mecca, which some researchers have described as "the most noticeably awful episode of its kind since the Islamic Revolution," offended Iran while at the same time raising concerns about Iranian attempts to topple the al-Saud Government and destabilize the region. As Tehran "examined the al-Saud 'own family's qualifications as protected managers of Islam's most heavenly locations" and sought the harm of the Saudi government, Iranian consultation organized these reasons for danger. In 1988, conciliatory connections became apathetic, and in the following years, Iranians were barred from performing the Haj.<sup>30</sup>

### **1.3 Saudi Arabia's response and the emergence of Sunni extremism**

The Khomeini regime not only disappointed Saudi Arabia by criticizing and humiliating its rulers the USA, which includes the two holiest mosques in Mecca and Medina, by implying that they were no longer morally upright enough to act as the guardians of Islam's holiest sites, but Iran's progressive message also helped spark an Islamic uprising across the Arabian Peninsula. On November 20, 1979, just 10 months after the Iranian Revolution, Juhaiman al-Utaibi and a Sunni Islamist rebel group known as the Ikhwan seized the Grand Mosque of Mecca in an immediate attempt to reclaim control of the Holy Land for the House of Saud. Islamist fundamentalism was aggressively supported in Saudi Arabia to counter this effort. Riyadh also supported the production of a wide range of anti-Shi'a and anti-Iranian pamphlets, which were intended to draw attention to the sectarian goals of the Khomeinist regime. Saudi Arabia sought to disprove Khomeini's interpretation of Islam by highlighting its Shi'a identity. In addition, Riyadh was connected to non- secular students all across the world, from Nigeria to Indonesia, through mosques and academic institutions supported by the Saudi government. Instead of using a moderate representation of Islam to oppose the extremism coming from Iran's Islamic Revolution. The Saudi regime is a hybrid one, neither totally secular nor fully non-secular, and is not usually a theocratic one like Iran. The non-secular status quo rules over

---

<sup>30</sup> Ramazani "Iraq's Decisions to Go to War, 1980 and 1990," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 1, pp. 47–70 Revolutionary Iran, pp. 57–59, (winter 2002).

culture, society, and religion, and the kingdom is in charge of the political sphere. First, after the establishment of the kingdom in 1932, non-secular nationalism became institutionalized. Second, beginning in the 1960s and with Gamal Abd al- Nasser advocating a pan-Arab platform, a pan-Islamic transnational identity was fostered within the backdrop of the Cold War. Thirdly, Following the Khomeini revolution, the Sahwa movement dominated the 1980s. This movement was a part of a sectarian bid war against Iran, which was bolstered by Saudi Arabia's status as the birthplace of the faith and the host of its holiest sites. Finally, there was a retreat towards Saudi nationalism under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in order to align it with the management's 2030 Vision.<sup>31</sup>

#### **1.4 Post 1979 Saudi-Iran Hostilities**

After the Ayatollah Khomeini-led theocratic Iranian Revolution in 1979, Iran started openly denouncing and undermining the political legitimacy and religious authority of the Saudi regime. But King Khalid, the Saudi Arabian monarch at the time, dispatched Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic revolution in 1979, a note of congratulations, saying that "Islamic solidarity" might serve as the foundation for improved ties between two countries. He continued by asserting that, since the Islamic Republic of Iran was established, there have been no barriers to two nations' cooperation. Following the event in 1987 in Mecca, Khomeini stated in a public speech that "<sup>32</sup> They said that "a band of heretics" controlled Mecca, calling them "vile and ungodly Wahhabis," who "are like daggers which have always pierced the heart of the Muslims from the back." Since this announcement, diplomatic ties between the two countries have been at an all-time low and have gotten worse since 1979 as a result of two major events:

1. The establishment of the revolutionary administration in Tehran followed the Iranian Revolution that toppled King Raza Shah Pehlevi. Tehran's outreach to the Middle Eastern region has been two-fold: Tehran sparked anti-king revolutions, which turned Sunni rulers against Iran b. founding of the supreme council/spiritual council, which promoted Shia Islam throughout the Middle East on a sectarian basis.
2. Saudi Arabia's leadership in the Afghan Jihad. In the Afghan Jihad, the US, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan were the three main players. The KSA's role is as follows: A major

---

<sup>31</sup> Mansoor Moaddel and Stuart A. Karabenick, Religious Fundamentalism among Young Muslims in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Oxford University Press, Vol. 86, No. 4 (Jun., 2008) pp. 1675-1705

<sup>32</sup> Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, sermon, Radio Tehran, July 20, 1988. Quoted in Fbis, July 21, 1988

contribution to the creation of jihadist literature was made by KSA. b. Jihadists were deployed by Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan, where they later founded Al Qaeda. c. KSA began pushing Wahabi Islam in Afghanistan and supporting it.<sup>33</sup>

### **1.5 Arab-Persian Ethnic Conflict**

The continuous conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia over influence in the Middle East and other Muslim regions is referred to as the Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict, or the Middle Eastern Cold War. The two nations had supported opposite sides in adjacent crises to differing degrees, such as the civil wars in Yemen and Syria as well as the conflicts in Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar, and Iraq. It also includes disagreements or broader rivalry in other countries and regions, such as Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other parts of North and East Africa, South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, the Balkans, and the Caucasus. the struggle for regional hegemony is fought on a number of fronts for geopolitical, economic, and sectarian influence.<sup>34</sup>

Today's competition is mostly a political and economic war that have been aggravated by religious divisions. As part of a bigger fight, both countries had taken advantage of sectarianism in the region. Shi'ites represent the majority of Muslims in Iran, although Saudi Arabia sees itself as the world's leading Sunni Muslim country.

Despite their divergent views on the Syrian civil war, Qatar and Tehran and its collaborators have become close. Iran and Turkey were two of the non-Arab nations that backed Qatar against Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations during the two-year-long diplomatic crisis in Qatar. The proxy war began with the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which saw the monarchical Imperial State of Iran, supported by the US, change into an Islamic republic. The Sunni-run Arab monarchies of the region, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Ba'athist regime in Iraq, and the other Persian Gulf states, which were mostly monarchies and had sizable Shia populations, were alarmed by the revolutionaries' demands for the overthrow of monarchies and the establishment of Islamic republics in place of secular governments. Before spreading to Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Lebanon in 1983, Islamist militants originally surfaced in Saudi Arabia in 1979.

The two nations made for the "twin pillar" Nixon Doctrine Middle East policy prior to the Iranian

---

<sup>33</sup> Tali R. Grumet: New Middle East Cold War: Saudi Arabia and Iran's Rivalry, Dr. Joseph Szyliowicz, August 2015

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad Ihsan Qadir and Muhammad Saifur Rehman, Saudi-Iranian Rivalry in the Middle East: Implications for Pakistan, Pakistan Horizon; Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 69, No. 4 (October 2016), pp. 57-72

Revolution. Following the US-led coup in Iran in 1979, the monarchs, particularly the monarchs. The establishment of Iran's new theocratic government in 1979 under the direction of Ayatollah Khomeini, who questioned the legitimacy of the Al Saud dynasty and its authority as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, damaged Saudi Arabia's position as the leader of the Muslim world. The relationship between the two countries improved when King Khalid first welcomed Iran and suggested that "Islamic solidarity" may serve as the cornerstone of such improvements. However, during the course of the next ten years, the situation severely deteriorated.

## **1.6 Sectarian Differences**

The rivalry between Saudi & Iran had been strategic in nature but sectarian factor was dominant. Iran promotes Shia Islam, Saudi promotes Wahabi Islam. It exacerbates since 1979 with two major events: Revolution in Iran that ended the rule of King Raza Shah Pehlevi and the religious revolutionary government was established in Tehran. The outreach of Tehran to the middle eastern world has been two dimensional:

1. Tehran started revolutions against the kings of the region this turned the Sunni rulers turned against Iran.
2. The establishment of supreme council/spiritual council that outreached middle east on sectarian ground by promoting Shia Islam. Afghan Jihad and Saudi Arabia's leading role in it. There were three key players in Afghan Jihad: Afghanistan-Saudi Arabia-US. Role of Saudi Arabian Kingdom (KSA) is as follows: a. KSA played a key role in preparation of Jihadist literature. b. Saudi Arabia sent Jihadists to Afghanistan who formed Al Qaeda later. c. KSA started funding and promoting Wahabi Islam in Afghanistan.

The Saudi government, unlike that of Iran, is not theocratic; rather, it was a hybrid monarchy that was neither entirely secular nor wholly religious. This was one of the primary distinctions between the two countries. Saudi Arabia experienced a sectarian movement as a result of the risks posed by the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the advent of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini administration.<sup>35</sup> The revolutionary Khomeini administration, on the other hand, is primarily predicated on sectarianism, which was reinforced in its constitution to support its own hegemonic geopolitical goals. Thus, when sectarianism became incompatible with the country's 2030 Vision and its development, Saudi Arabia replaced it with Saudi nationalism, but Iran strengthened its

---

<sup>35</sup> R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*, University Press, 1985

sectarian identity since changing it would lead the system to collapse. It was crucial to first shed light on the historical setting as well as look at the ideological and political distinctions between Iran and Saudi Arabia in order to better comprehend the sectarian conflicts in both nations.

Iran's political philosophy Following the 1979 Revolution, the Khomeini dictatorship transformed Iran from an earthly kingdom into a fundamentalist theocracy, setting the stage for a shadowy ancient period inside the region that focused on highlighting sectarian divides. That Iran under the Khomeini regime became an Islamic Revolution first and an Islamic Republic second was what distinguishes the dictatorship and is sometimes overlooked by more favorable observers inside the West. The republic is undoubtedly a way to aid and perfect the revolution; the revolution did and still does not exist to idealize the kingdom. The revolution is given priority as a result. The best governor is the commander of the revolution, who is no longer commander of the republic.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) had sworn to safeguard the integrity of the revolution from opponents both inside and outside. The best chief is the chief of the revolution, no longer of the republic. In order to create Iranian hegemony throughout the Islamic world, the regime has therefore endeavored to export its progressive philosophy for the same purpose that it established order of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. This led American ambassador in response to a series of events, Henry Kissinger commented on Iran's need to determine "whether or not it wishes to be a country or a purpose. Thus, the rejection of foreign dominion over Iran, especially the influence of the United States, is the central theme of Iran's progressive ideology. The most commonly used statement are anti-US and anti-colonial ones that highlight Iran's choice to pursue discrimination and an "Arab Street" strategy that highlights Iran's support for the Palestinian cause and opposes Western imperialism, particularly Washington's hegemonic schemes within the region, even though it does so mockingly to express its own dominant political goals.

Iran had pursued a two-pronged strategy employing both challenging and delicate energy methods. In terms of hard power, Iran had provided financial, ideological, and material support to non-kingdom organizations to further its strategic interests. These organizations primarily include Armed Shi'a groups such as Hezbollah, the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, and Sunni groups like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas are present in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

It uses its media empire, academic institutions, nonprofits, government-backed programs, and global progressive endeavors as sources of its tender energy. In order to mobilize hundreds of people in favour of Khomeinist progressive philosophy and against what were considered as "illegitimate" forms of government, it had intended to propagate Khomeinist and anti-Western ideology both at home and abroad. Iran uses its foreign policy to create discord and topple Arab Gulf monarchies since the Khomeini regime's revolutionary philosophy was anti-monarchical, but its major goal had been to weaken Saudi Arabia's authority as the guardian of Islam's holiest sites. When faced with these dangers over the years, Saudi Arabia had responded in a variety of ways.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Henry Munson, Jr., *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988

## Chapter 2

### Complexities of Saudi Iran Bilateral Relations

#### 2.1 Regional Confrontations

Saudi-Iran were geo strategic rivals in the Persian Gulf (also called the Gulf region). The Saudi-Iran rivalry had roots at structural level. The contentious issues between the two ranges from the hunger for power and aspiration for the Muslim world leadership, sectarian and ideological contrast, antithetical government system, and the nuclear strength of Iran in the region. Arab Spring brought a turning point in the politics of Middle East. Many states went to structural changes after the advent of the 'Arab Spring'. Many Arab countries tried to transform their political structures and reforms like; Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria. But the conservative middle eastern societies were not mature enough to absorb western-led structural reforms and it resulted into a power vacuum providing an opportunity to both the major power contenders; Saudi Arabia and Iran to exploit the crisis situation. In this rivalry Saudi Arabia was a status quo power (hegemon/ leader/ established) while Iran was a revisionist power. Because of their deep-rooted historical differences, both the countries had been containing each other at every platform and on have also differences on the regional issues.

##### 2.1.1 Differences on Yemen

The biggest problem in Yemen had been 'tribble divide': Southern and Northern tribes. Northern tribes have control over resources, and decision-making process in Sana (capital of Yemen) while Southern tribes had been exploited.<sup>37</sup> To get their rights, southern tribes started armed resistance in 2001 under the leadership of Badruddin Al-Houthi. Political divide in Yemen: In 2011 agreement took place between Ali Abdullah Saleh and Mansoor Hadi.<sup>38</sup> The agreement was that Ali Abdullah Saleh (the then President) stepped down and Hadi became the President. Saleh lost the support of US and Gulf Coordination Council (GCC).<sup>39</sup> The biggest reason for this loss of support was his failure against Al-Qaeda on the soil of Yemen. US and GCC started supporting a new candidate against Ali

---

<sup>37</sup> De Cordier B. Pakistan and the GCC countries: Complementarity, or a center-periphery tale? (Central Asia Economic Paper No. 11). Central Asia Economic Paper. 2013

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid



Abdullah Saleh – Mansoor Hadi.<sup>40</sup> Hadi would have been the President of the country for two years after which he had been conducting presidential elections but he did not conduct elections rather continued to be the president of the country. He violated the agreement. Ultimately supporters of Saleh started armed resistance against Hadi. Ali Saleh's supporters and southern tribes made an alliance against Hadi leading Sana. Yemen like any Muslim country is divided on sectarian lines. Majority of the people are Sunni (Salafi Sunni, follow Wahabi school of thought) Arabian scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Rebel Zaidi's who also being called Houthis are primarily of Shia schools of thought.<sup>41</sup> As Houthi rebels are fighting against Mansoor Hadi, on one hand Ali Abdullah Saleh and Houthis made united front against

Mansoor Hadi and this divide was more on sectarian lines. Iran started supporting the Houthi rebels while Saudi Arabia supported Hadi's government. The Houthis had been declared as freedom fighters by Iran, and as per GCC, Saudi Arabia and US, Iran had been providing covert military and financial support to Houthi rebels. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia supports Hadi government. Hadi asked for military support from Saudi Arabia and first Air attack by GCC took place on March 27, 2015, and Second Air attack by GCC on 4th April 2015.<sup>42</sup> GCC specially UAE and Saudi Arabia were supporting southern tribal council as both the countries are pursuing their interests on sectarian grounds.<sup>43</sup> Studying the impact of the oil industry on Persian Gulf security is an application of RSCT's emphasis on industries other than military security. States continue to be the primary targets of security, of course, but in some areas other entities may be more important or even to be dominant. Thus, the "relative intensity of inter-state security relations, patterns of amity and enmity, and distribution of power" are among the essential components of RSCT.

### **2.1.2 Disagreements on Syrian Issues**

Syria is a majority-Sunni nation with a population that is 64% Sunni.<sup>44</sup> Shia people, on the other hand, make up around 22% of the population of Syria. President Assad who was an Alawi-Shia, was supported by Iran. Syria had been significant for both Saudi Arabia and Iran, much as Yemen was for Saudi Arabia. The continuation of Iran's military assistance to Syria ensured Iran's dominance

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Geraled M. Feierestian, Yemen: The 60-Year war, Middle East Institute, February 2019-2

<sup>44</sup> Christopher Phillips, Third World Quarterly, pp. 357-376, Taylor & Francis, Ltd. 2015

over Damascus. Hezbollah, a powerful military group, was instrumental in the Syrian crisis.<sup>45</sup> Iran wanted continuation of Assad's government in Damascus while Saudis wanted Sunni dominance in the country. Thus, Syrian issue was also of the regional issues which divided the interests of Saudi Arabia and Iran in the region. As for Syria, the issue of Kurdistan was also important to be discussed. Kurd population spreading out in five regional countries: Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Armenia, had been striving for a separate Kurd's homeland. Syria is a country which also had Kurd population. When the rebel forces including Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Al-Nusra Front (ANF) started fighting against Bashar ul Assad government, this trend also provided Kurds of Syria with an opportunity to gain influence in the country.<sup>46</sup>

Basically, current political crisis in Syria began when in the year 2000, the previous president Hafiz ul Assad (father of Bashar ul Assad) died after ruling the country for 30 years. Bashar ul Assad became the President in the year 2000. He made promises to bring reforms particularly social and economic and political reforms but he did not fulfil his promises until 2011.<sup>47</sup> Arab uprisings started in 2011, first in Tunisia, then Egypt, Libya and finally Syria. In the Arab uprisings people began demanding social rights. Instead bringing reforms Bashar used force which made the protestors to had violent responses. The protestors started getting support from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).<sup>48</sup>

Third biggest problem concerning Syria was Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which captured some of the areas in Syria and Iraq for a few years.<sup>49</sup> Actually, in 2003 Abul Massab, al Zarqawi established Al-Qaeda in Iraq but having ideological differences with Al-Qaeda, he established Al-Nusra.<sup>50</sup> In 2013 a new branch formulated from Al-Nusra, which later shaped as ISIS or Daesh. ISIS initially declared itself as a political entity not fighting under religious lines under the leadership of Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi. First capital of ISIS was Mosel in Iraq. After expansion to Syria, its capital was shifted to Raqqa in Syria. Iran supporting Bashar ul Assad's govt, also favoured Russian interference in Syria.<sup>30</sup>

## **2.1 Conflict of Interests in Iraq**

Saudi Arabia supported Iraq in the 1980s as Saddam's administration in that country continued

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Robert S. Ford, the Syrian civil war a new stage, but is it the final one? Middle East Institute, 2019-8

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> De Cordier B. Pakistan and the GCC countries: Complementarity, or a center-periphery tale? Central Asia Economic Paper. 2013

to be hostile to Iran. During the ten-year war between Iraq and Iran in the 1980s, Saudi Arabia helped Iraq. Since the majority of the population of Iraq is Shia, the U.S. war that overthrew Saddam's administration in 2003 resulted in the establishment of a Shia-dominated government. Iran's supply route to Syria via Iraq strengthened during the post-Saddam Iraqi government. In Iraq, which was Saudi Arabia's and Iran's closest neighbor, Iran's influence had greatly expanded.<sup>51</sup> Saddam decided to attack Iran first because of the country's depleted military as a result of its revolution. Following airstrikes on Iranian air bases on September 22, 1980, Iraqi forces attacked the Khuzestan oil-producing border area.<sup>52</sup> At initially, the assault was successful; by November, Iraq had taken Khorramshahr and added more land.

The infusion of revolutionary militias to the regular military forces fueled the Iranian resistance, which quickly stopped the Iraqi advance. Iran began a counteroffensive in 1981, and by the start of 1982, they got practically all of the lost territory back. By the end of that year, when its soldiers had retreated to the border areas from the previous conflict, Iraq made an effort to find peace. Iran declined under Khomeini's direction and insisted on escalating the fight to topple Saddam's government. In July 1982, Iran launched its first of several fruitless efforts to take the Iraqi naval port of Basra.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Iran's considerable nuclear superiority, Iraq possessed better weapons and owing to direct assistance from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Arab governments as well as covert assistance from Western nations, particularly the United States. Peace Treaty, Armistice, and Legacy Iraq started its own series of ground assaults in the spring of 1988,<sup>54</sup> demoralized by Iran's numerous unsuccessful offensives over the years. Iran's clergy leaders were persuaded that there was little chance of a decisive victory by Iraqi gains on the battlefield. Under Security Council Resolution 598,<sup>55</sup> the two nations agreed to accept an UN- mediated ceasefire in July; On August 20, 1988, the war officially came to an end. There were between 1 million and 2 million casualties in the Iran-Iraq War, with 500,000 people dying, included the wholesale murder of tens of thousands of Kurds by

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Khalid Z. Evolution of Saudi–Pakistan strategic relationship 1947–1990: Military security and economic factors. *Strategic Studies*, 13(1), 53–77. (1989).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> William A. Darity “Iran-Iraq War: Eight Brutal Years.” *New York Times*, July 22, 1988

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

Iraqi soldiers.<sup>56</sup>

Due to a strengthened military and the merciless desire of its leader, Iraq enhanced its influence in the region as a result of the battle. Almost all Arab nations had supported Iraq throughout the War to contain Iran. On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein issued an order for an invasion of Kuwait, starting the first Persian Gulf War. It would be a mistake to assume that Iraq's relations with Saudi Arabia will be trouble-free even if it establishes a government that is legitimate and stable. Relations between the Saudi and Iraqi states had been tensing ever since they emerged following World War I.<sup>57</sup> The post-Saddam era appears to be the beginning of a new era of bilateral disagreements regarding oil policy; Saudi Arabia's backing for Wahhabi propaganda against the Sunni population in Iraq as well as the demonstration effect that Iraq's democratization had on Saudi Arabia are other factors. These include cross-border religious influence, particularly from Shia in both states.<sup>58</sup>

In the near future, Saudi Arabia and the United States will view Iraq from very similar angles, with both placing a major focus on halting the spread of terrorism brought on by the combat in Iraq and reestablishing peace. Beyond that, there was plenty of opportunity for disagreement. Saudi Arabia values its links to Washington, but domestic and regional pressures will make it less likely to support American policy.<sup>39</sup> Riyadh's development-related roadblocks will frequently divert the nation's attention. U.S. diplomacy will continue to face difficulties in ensuring that Saudi Arabia was not a source of disruption but rather a force for stability in the Gulf.<sup>40</sup>

## **2.2 Conflict on Bahrain's Issue**

Bahrain, an island nation, was a trading center between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley during the Bronze Age.<sup>59</sup> Around 2,000 B.C., the Dilmun civilization collapsed due to a decrease in trade from India. In the seventh century, Bahrain's inhabitants converted to Islam. Following then, Bahrain was ruled by Islamic caliphates with bases in Damascus and Baghdad, followed by Persian, Omani, and Portuguese armies.<sup>60</sup> Since 1783, when the Al Khalifa family departed the Saudi peninsula and

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

<sup>57</sup> Paul Johnson. *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties* (Revised Edition). (Harper Perennial, 1991)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> OREN BARAK, *Dilemmas of Security in Iraq*, Security Dialogue; Department of political Science and Department of International Relations, December 2007; pp. 455-475

took possession of the island from a Persian garrison, Bahrain has been controlled by a Sunni Muslim Bani Utah tribe.<sup>61</sup>The royal family ratified a treaty in 1830 that designated Britain, which at the time controlled the Persian Gulf, protected Bahrain as its protectorate. Bahrain and the other minor emirates suffered when Britain removed its military presence in the Persian Gulf in 1968<sup>62</sup> in the region began to push for a permanent status. The United Nations held a "referendum" in 1970, and the results showed that the people of Bahrain were opposed to joining Iran.<sup>63</sup> This was recognised by the Iranian parliament and approved by UN Security Council Resolution 278. Bahrain discussed union with eight other Persian Gulf emirates between 1970 and 1971. The other seven emirates combined to form the United Arab Emirates (UAE), while Bahrain and Qatar both gained independence. Bahrain achieved its independence on August 15, 1971.<sup>64</sup>

In 2011, an uprising started against the Sunni king of Bahrain. Actually, after Hosni Mubarak's ouster as president of Egypt on February 14, 2011, the long-standing tensions that existed between the government and the opposition,<sup>65</sup> which was dominated by Shia Muslims, developed into the significant uprising. Protesters erected a blockade on the Manama financial district on March 13, 2011, which led to the GCC sending troops into Bahrain on March 14. Bahrain's maritime boundaries were fortified by Kuwaiti naval forces, while the GCC's unified Peninsula Shield force which included 600 UAE police and 1,200 Saudi armored forces took up positions in strategic areas. Cherif Bassiouni, a specialist, was asked to investigate how the administration handled the rebellion.<sup>66</sup>

For punishing government personnel who misbehaved during the uprising, the study offered 26 recommendations. Congressmen had pushed to delay some security assistance from the United States to Bahrain until it fully complies with the BICI recommendations.<sup>67</sup> The supply of tear gas, small guns, Humvees, and "crowd control items" to Bahrain would had been prohibited by two measures in the 114th Congress, S. 2009 and H.R. 3445, until Bahrain received a confirmation from the State

---

<sup>61</sup> NRC Handelsblad (2012). Protesten en arrestaties in Bahrein in aanloop naar Grand Prix June 14, 2012

<sup>62</sup> Project on Middle East Democracy. "State Department Reports on Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI."

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Alainna Lilola, Class Politics are at the Center of Bahrain's Political Conflict Politics & Society, August 18,2021

<sup>66</sup> NRC Handelsblad (2012). Protesten en arrestaties in Bahrein in aanloop naar Grand Prix June 14, 2012

<sup>67</sup> Project on Middle East Democracy. "State Department Reports on Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI." June 23, 2016; and POMED. "One Year Later: Assessing Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI Report." November 2012.

Department that all BICI recommendations had been fully implemented.<sup>68</sup> However, neither bill received a vote of confidence from a congressional body. Examined in light of the coverage of the protests was the pro-regime sports media's coverage of the 2011 revolt.<sup>69</sup>

In terms of its political usage, the regime's use of sports media as a tool to quell the demonstrations and bolster its hold on the nation during the revolt was unparalleled. Iran and the United Arab Emirates was engaged in a more contentious territorial dispute that was related to the Bahrain-Iran issue. The population of the first was barely around 2,000, while the third and fourth are practically deserts.<sup>70</sup> However, they were significant from a strategic perspective due to their position on the canal that connects the Gulf oilfields to the Indian Ocean. Iran took control of the islands when the British departed the area in 1971, and when Iran gave up its claims to Bahrain, British worries disappeared. But despite Iran assuming control before the UAE was recognized as a sovereign state by the international world, the UAE had remained the archipelago's legitimate owner.

In September 2011, the UAE presented its argument to the UN. One news source quotes an Emirati official as saying, "It is against international law for Iran to occupy three tiny islands in the Persian Gulf,"<sup>71</sup> before the General Assembly. Iran's response was to blame the US and UK, or "foreign powers who seek to destabilize the region," for the entire situation.<sup>72</sup> Iran categorically disagreed with the United Arab Emirates' position, stating that Abu Musa and the Tunbs "will remain forever." Iran is unlikely to consider ceding control given the enormous military investments it had made in Abu Musa, much to the dismay of the UAE.

Greater Iran on the Iranian Defense Map Extreme Iranian nationalists assert more territorial claims in the area, far more than the Iranian government had been prepared to take into account.<sup>73</sup> The United Arab Emirates, according to some commenters on articles about the Tunbs dispute, should belong to Iran because it lacks international legitimacy. The United Arab Emirates only existed for 40 years, according to history. Iran covered the whole country. The fact that some of the peninsula

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Sayyed Mohammad Mousavi, The Bahrain Crisis and the Religious and Geopolitical Conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Payame Noor University, Tehran, IRAN. October 2021

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Security Council, U. N. Security Council Imposes Sanctions on Iran for Failure to Halt Uranium Enrichment, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1737 (2006).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

speaks Kumzari, an Iranian language, strengthens the relationship. Musandam makes money from smuggling products into Iran, which was estimated to be worth between \$250,000 and \$500,000 per day, and had a lot of potential for tourism.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, despite this illicit trade, relations between Iran and Oman are friendly. Musandam Peninsula Map When Iranian nationalists periodically use harsh rhetoric to establish cultural and territorial claims to countries on and off the Gulf, supporters of the anti-Iranian Arab regime frequently reply in kind. In response to a comment on a story on the Tunbs dispute, one person wrote: According to UAE Sheikh al-Nahayan, "the occupation of any Arab land is an occupation."<sup>75</sup> "Without a question, Israel has a stronger case than Iran." Iran's stance on its conquered lands is "Got it, Keep it, No Negotiations."<sup>76</sup> They ought to refrain from bringing up the Palestinian conflict. Map of the Musandam Peninsula. Supporters of the anti-Iranian Arab rulers usually strike back when Iran nationalists sometimes employ strong rhetoric to stake out cultural and territorial claims to nations on and off the Gulf. It is highly improbable that the statement is true since the Emirati official would not have used the insulting term "Persian Gulf," which was frequently used in the Arab world.<sup>77</sup>

### **2.3 Uprising Against the Sunni king in Bahrain**

Iran, Bahrain, and Lebanon were highlighted, along with the spread of the new sectarianism in the Arab world and significant policy recommendations for the United States. During the Arab Awakening, a new Sunni-Shi'a rift had emerged. Because it demands that religious differences be treated seriously as such and not only as a by product of social, economic, or political strife, this division had made it significantly more difficult for the United States to handle diplomatic and geopolitical challenges. Religion, gender, and ethnicity now influence social and political interaction far more than they did in the past.

While experts, academics, and policymakers were quick to point out that the struggle between Shi'a and Sunnis was one inside Islam, the United States did not agree. As the United States strives to defend its Middle Eastern interests, it should be very concerned about the wider geopolitical

---

<sup>74</sup> Ahmed Montazeran and Kashif Mumtaz, 'Iran-Pakistan: Cooperation for Regional Stability and Peace', *Strategic Studies*, 24(1), 2004, p. 75) Until 2002.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>76</sup> Matthiesen, Toby *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring*. Stanford University Press, 2013.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*

consequences of the increase of sectarianism, despite the fact that analysts, intellectuals, and decision-makers were quick to point out that the Shi'a-Sunni war was a struggle within Islam. For instance,<sup>78</sup> both sides were becoming more radicalized as a result of the lack of cooperation between Bahrain's Sunni government and the Shi'a-dominated opposition. Long-term security goals will be compromised if the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf nations that back the Sunni Al Khalifa tribe did not support the opposition or take action to hold the Al Khalifa government accountable for its repressive policies that had resulted in well-reported human rights violations. From March 2012 to January 2013, there were more than 200 in-depth interviews with influential figures, analysts, and policymakers in the Middle East, in addition to reports in Persian, Arabic, and English, and another twenty interviews in the United States and Europe.<sup>79</sup> The third portion, which will contain some analysis and recommendations for U.S. officials, will address the difficulties caused by the resurgence of sectarian discourse in the politics of the Muslim Middle East.

#### **2.4 Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Saudi-Iran Confrontation**

A number of Middle Eastern nations as well as numerous regional and global Islamic organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), had been impacted by the conflict between the two fierce rivals, Saudi Arabia and Iran. With 57 member states, the OIC was the largest international organization after the UN. On January 21, 2016, the OIC issued a strong resolution denouncing Iran, supporting Saudi Arabia in their diplomatic dispute with the latter. Since its founding, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had upheld a rigorous policy of neutrality, refusing to publicly support any of its member states in disputes with one another. At first, it appeared that the OIC was capable of using diplomacy to break the impasse between Saudi Arabia and Iran. He emphasized that the OIC could not support one nation over another or influence in the internal affairs of its members. Iyad Madani, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, was prepared to work toward a diplomatic resolution and help restore the deteriorating ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

At first, it appeared that the OIC was open to using diplomacy to break the impasse between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Several Arab OIC members, including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen,

---

<sup>78</sup> Reuters Staff, the 2011 uprising in Bahrain and what's happened since, February, 2011

<sup>79</sup> Ibid



and Tunisia, experienced protracted civil wars and violent conflicts as a result of the Arab Spring, with the notable exception of Saudi Arabia. Despite all odds, Madani made significant efforts in the first two years of his administration mostly in collaboration with Middle Eastern member states to create regional zones of "common religious and cultural space" that would be resilient to challenges from the Islamic world. But these initiatives produced no noticeable outcomes. Having presumably come to the conclusion that forming wide Islamic alliances within the OIC would be fruitless, Madani progressively started to lean towards more slender and politically intimate unions, such as the GCC and the Arab League, which prioritized the interests of their member states, particularly Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia used scare tactics against member states in order to achieve its goal, primarily by using its financial clout to secure support for its position against Tehran. For instance, Somalia and a number of other Arab nations, including Bahrain and Sudan, who were neighbors and had long been close allies of Saudi Arabia. What Riyadh ultimately accomplished was the exact opposite. It did not so much isolate Tehran as it widened sectarian divisions within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which unlike the Arab League, represents the whole Muslim world. Because of this, Shi'a Muslims now doubt the OIC's independence and dedication to Muslim unity as required by the charter.

The recent argued between Saudi Arabia and Iran clarifies that the majority of conflicts in the Middle East were internal conflicts between Muslims, conflicts within civilizations rather than between civilizations. And at its core was a centuries-old conflict involving Sunnis and Shi'as in Islam that has recently become more intense and involves all Muslim nations and organizations. Russia, which had observer status in the OIC, feels that the international community should work hard to increase the OIC's prominence and solidify its place in both regional and global politics because of this. The question remains, though, whether or not the OIC can bring its member nations together in a true collective discourse that goes beyond sectarian barriers. If not, perhaps talking about the formation of a "Organization of Sunni Islamic Cooperation" would be more appropriate.

## **2.6 JCPOA Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action**

Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) reached an agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on July 14, 2015, which guarantees that Iran's nuclear program would only be utilized for peaceful purposes. On October 18, 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) went into force and participants

started putting their plans into action.<sup>80</sup> Implementation Day for the JCPOA fell on 16 January 2016. According to the JCPOA, Iran had demonstrated that it had complied with its nuclear commitments. As a result, the United States and the European Union had loosened sanctions on Iran related to its nuclear program. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had acknowledged that Iran had implemented the crucial nuclear-related steps stipulated in the JCPOA.<sup>81</sup>

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2231(2015) on July 20, 2015, approving the JCPOA.<sup>82</sup> On July 31, the EU Council adopted the first of these clauses into EU legislation. These acts specifically stated that the export of more than 300 kilograms of enriched uranium from Iran in exchange for natural uranium, the provision of materials, equipment, or assistance in the following areas: modernization of the Arak reactor, modification of two cascades at the Fordow facility for the production of stable isotopes, and exemptions for necessary activities and transfer: to the preparation for the JCPOA's execution as judged by the UN Security Council Committee established in accordance with UNSCR 1737 (2006) to be in keeping with UNSCR 2231's objectives, to the execution of particular nuclear-related acts detailed in the JCPOA.<sup>83</sup>

The JCPOA went into effect on October 18, 2015, or 90 days following UN Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015).<sup>84</sup> To fulfill their JCPOA obligations, participants in the agreement made the appropriate plans and arrangements. According to the JCPOA, the EU enacted legal measures to lift all nuclear-related financial and economic sanctions on Implementation Day, concomitant with Iran implementing the nuclear-related measures that were agreed upon and verified by the IAEA.<sup>85</sup>

The day of implementation, after confirmation from the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran had carried out the nuclear-related steps, the majority of EU and UN sanctions were withdrawn on January 16, 2016. All financial and economic sanctions relating to nuclear energy had been abolished by the EU. However, there were still certain limitations in place, including embargoes on weapons and ballistic missiles, limitations on the transfer of items that could contribute to proliferation, and limitations on a few of the individuals and groups on the list.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Debalina Ghoshal, "Pakistan Keen to Keep Ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia," YaleGlobal, October 01, 2015

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Checkel, J., *International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework*. International Organization, 59(4), 801- 826. (2015).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Baldwin, D. A. 2012. *Power and International Relations*, in *Handbook of International Relations*. 25 January

A significant number of European states that had actively participated in the negotiations since they first had signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The interests of European powers in the agreement align with those of Iran and the US. Europe's relations with Iran are primarily economic, despite the fact that the US had been a vital European partner in many other ways. One of the main reasons the JCPOA was equally important to the Europeans was the Middle East and its natural resources; the US withdrawal abruptly also left the European powers in ruins. The remaining signatories, particularly the United States' important allies Britain, France, and Germany, had pledged to uphold the agreement despite the US's withdrawal; however, the European powers had repeatedly pushed the US to re-join and honor its commitment, but to no avail. The Biden administration was also concerned about the growing influence of China and Russia in the region in the absence of the US, which could eventually be detrimental to the superpower's political and strategic objectives. Given its involvement in the Syrian conflict, Russia's interests and aspirations in the area were apparent. Through its economic endeavors, particularly its renowned geo-economic project known as "BRI," China has also been stepping up its presence in the region. Although the JCPOA as a whole may have suffered greatly from the United States' withdrawal from it, it is undeniable that other superpowers like China and Russia may have benefited from it. But given the Biden administration's intention to rejoin the agreement and the results of the Iranian presidential election, President Joe Biden will face additional difficulties in carrying out his plan to rejoin the agreement. It was widely assumed that hardliners who had been vocal opponents of this agreement since its inception have returned to positions of authority in Iran as a result of the presidential elections. As a result, the Biden administration will face additional difficulties as adjusting to the new leadership and their interpretation of the agreement won't be simple.

## **2.7 IMCTC – Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition**

This is an organization of forty-one Muslim countries mostly Arab and also Pakistan with major objectives to counter cyber terrorism as almost every Muslim country is facing from terrorist organizations.<sup>87</sup> Counter terrorist organization: there were major Muslims countries Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq facing existential security threats and it was important for them to collectively counter these threats. Counter Terrorist Ideology and counter the terrorists exploiting the jihadist ideologies.

---

2016.

<sup>87</sup> Antonino Occhiuto, Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), January 2015.

Military and ideological efforts to build counter terrorist narrative.<sup>88</sup> As a result of a Saudi-Gulf effort, the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) was established in 2015.<sup>89</sup> The alliance's founding members include Egypt, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Guinea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, and Morocco. Others include Niger, Nigeria, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>90</sup> In 2016, Oman and Afghanistan also joined. The alliance was created because Arab countries have come under fire for not doing enough to combat Daesh (ISIS) and stop domestic radicalization.

The IMCTC aspires to create a single, pan-Islamic front against terrorism by offering an integrated platform for members to discuss, debate, and work together on the implementation of counter terrorism measures in four domains: communications, finance for counterterrorism, ideology, and the military.<sup>91</sup> The IMCTC had concentrated primarily on jihadi ideology, recruitment, military prowess, and funding for terrorist organizations since its formation. Focusing on ideology was in line with Gulf efforts to combat the influence of extremist preachers and deradicalize the region. From inspiring a record number of people to join jihadist causes to the rise in terrorist attacks in the region, the spread of violent extremist ideology has had a significant impact.<sup>92</sup>

It is a well-known fact that Saudi Arabia and Iran engaged in a cold war during which they both controlled Shia nations. Over the course of the last few decades, these two nations have used proxies to fight each other in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Given the historical rivalry between the two countries, Iran's non-participation in the Saudi-led alliance or, for that matter, Saudi Arabia's refusal to extend an invitation to Iran and other Shia-dominated nations to join the coalition doubles their assessment of the threat posed by the formation of the Islamic Military Counterterrorism Coalition. The IMCTC member states ought to concentrate more on stopping terrorism throughout the Muslim world as opposed to supporting Saudi Arabia or Iran in their protracted conflict based on sectarianism. Therefore, the Muslim world as a whole will generally be aware that a sectarian division among them would be equivalent to undermining the legitimacy of this military alliance,

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

<sup>90</sup> Antonino Occhiuto; Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), Euro Gulf Information Center, 15 January 2018

<sup>91</sup> Ibid

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

which was founded on religious grounds. In the end, this would be counterproductive and upset the geopolitical balance of the Middle East and other major regional powers. Following NATO's withdrawal, the alliance must step in to help Afghanistan rebuild its peace in order to eradicate small militant groups. All member states had the equal right to participate in alliance decision-making without any obstacles. The member nations of the alliance may divide up the responsibilities based on their respective capacities. Other Muslim states that haven't joined the alliance yet may benefit from policy flexibility brought about by the alliance. It is also suggested that, in order for the alliance to last a long time, its membership may not be limited to Muslim states alone, and that future members may wish to consider joining non-Muslim nations. Furthermore, in order for the alliance to succeed, it must operate under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations. This means that the alliance may continue to exist even in the event that the immediate threat posed by ISIS or ISIL from Afghanistan and other states with a majority of Muslims is eliminated

The Saudi Iran rival relations had been disturbing the regional environment of the Middle East. Throughout, both the major powers have been implying to exert their influence in pursuit of being the 'Regional Power'. Likewise, the contentious nature of Saudi-Iran bilateral relations had serious implications for other countries who were related to the region and diplomatic partners of both Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan being a neighboring country of Iran and a close diplomatic partner of Saudi Arabia remain in to a complex scenario to forge its relations towards both the countries.

### 3. Chapter 3

## Pakistan Relation with Saudi-Arabia

### 3.1 Foundation of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Relations

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had maintained friendly ties since the inception of Pakistan in 1947. Religious, cultural, and economic ties between the people of both countries date back many centuries. Another basis for the relationship is adherence to common Islamic identity. The two nations formally established their friendship in 1951 by signing a Treaty of Friendship. Saudi Arabia always supported Pakistan in every thick and thin, therefore Pakistan consider Saudi Arabia as its strategic partner. In Pakistan wars with India and advocated Kashmir issue in favor of Pakistan. Besides, the military, diplomatic and politico-economic ties of both the states remain cordial throughout.

Over the ensuing decades, substantial financial and strategic help provided to one another by the two friendly nations whenever necessary served to strengthen bilateral relations.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, the two countries had been successful in developing a particular synergy for one another's long-term growth. Nearly two million Pakistanis had emigrated, and the bulk of them reside in Saudi Arabia. Engineers, workers, and construction experts from Pakistan had made a significant contribution to Saudi Arabia's infrastructure development. Throughout the relationship's history, Saudi Arabia had provided financial support for a number of bilateral initiatives in Pakistan. For instance, <sup>94</sup>Saudi Arabia donated \$10 million to create the International Islamic University in Islamabad.<sup>95</sup> The Faisal Mosque, which bears King Faisal's name and is a prominent landmark in Islamabad, Pakistan, was another wonderful indication of the bilateral ties between the two Muslim nations. In the honour of Saudi King Faisal, Pakistan's third largest city Lyallpur was named 'Faisalabad'.

---

<sup>93</sup> Naveed Ahmad, Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Relations.” Saudi Arabia: Embassy of Pakistan. The Middle East; Pakistan Horizon, pp 52-67, 1982.

<sup>94</sup> Banish Khan, Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, Religion, Spirituality and Foreign Policy Dynamics: A Case Study of Relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan Volume No. 57, Issue No. 1 (January – June, 2020)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

### 3.2 Religious Factor in Saudi- Pak Relations

The historical ties between the two nations in terms of religion, culture, and ideology set the foundation of the bilateral relations. As the country that gave birth to Islam and was home to its two holiest sites, Saudi Arabia was regarded favorable by Pakistani Muslims, the majority of whom were Sunni Muslims. Saudi Arabia had aided Sunni religious organizations and madrasas in Pakistani society by assisting them in extending their ideological and religious influence during the Soviet Union invasion in Afghanistan.<sup>96</sup> Saudi Arabia had always supported Pakistan and had engaged with sizable segments of the nation's political and religious elite, viewing itself as "movers and shakers in Pakistan's internal affairs."<sup>97</sup>

In Pakistan's political crises and disputes Saudi Arabia has a positive role to play often. Particularly, during the military and civilian disagreement the Saudis had likewise occasionally served as a mediator.<sup>98</sup> The Saudi ambassador to the United States, Adel al-Jubeir, reportedly claimed in a WikiLeaks cable that the Saudis were not just spectators but actually participants in Pakistan in 2009.<sup>99</sup> Saudi support for Pakistan's policies wasn't necessarily supported by the complexity and diversity of Pakistan's political and religious views<sup>100</sup>. Regarding Saudi Arabia's political and religious influence in Pakistan there had been many controversies. First, due of their sectarian approach to dealing with Islamic parties, madrasas, and groups in Pakistan, all religious groups and religious-political parties in the country do not consider the Saudis to be equally credible. Second, according to, some scholars think that Pakistan's national political discourse is still free of sectarian inclinations.<sup>101</sup> Thirdly, perceptions of Pakistan and the Pakistani people tend to influence Saudi influence on Pakistani politics and religion differently. For instance, Pakistan's consensus to maintain neutrality prevented the Saudis from securing Pakistan's military help for the crisis in Yemen. Fourthly, despite the fact that the people of Pakistan and their leaders recognize Saudi Arabia as the holiest country in the world. Protests and rallies in favour of Saudi Arabia by small religious and

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Lacey, Robert. *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia*. Saudi Arabia's closest Muslim and Non-Arab ally, Pakistan, 2009.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Ibid

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

sectarian organizations and parties, including some that have Saudi Arabia's financial assistance, were unable to garner the attention and participation of the public and the government because there were no significant religious-political parties. Most of these demonstrations took place at venues provided by the coalition Tehreek-e-Difa-e-Harmain Sharifain.<sup>102</sup>

### **3.3 Pakistan's Economic Interests with Saudi Arabia**

The reorganization of the bilateral relationship between the two nations to stress its economic aspects had served as the cornerstone of this new cooperation. Former PM Imran Khan, from visited Saudi Arabia from May 7-9, 2021. The bilateral negotiations then took place in Jeddah's Al- Salam Palace.<sup>103</sup> The two parties discussed and reiterated the need for closer collaboration and in light of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Pakistan's development objectives, the two sides underlined the need for greater cooperation and shared ideas on how to improve economic and trade connections between the two nations by looking into investment prospects. Encouragement of collaboration in various fields, including energy, science, technology, agriculture, and culture, was a major topic of debate. To further develop and widen bilateral relations, the following agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) were signed:<sup>104</sup>

- The MoU on Fighting Illicit Traffic in Narcotics, Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, and Precursor Chemicals,
- The Agreement on Establishment of Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council (SPSCC), and other agreements.
- Framework Memorandum of Understanding for the Financing of Projects in the Development of Water Resources, Infrastructure, and Hydropower between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD).
- Agreements on two topics: the transfer of convicted prisoners, and
- Cooperation in the fight against crime.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> Pakistan dispatches humanitarian assistance to flood hit Iran". Mehr News Agency. 10 April 2019. Archived from the original on 11 April 2019. Retrieved 7 July 2019).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Joint Statement for the visit of the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan, May 8, 2021.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid



was successful in convincing Saudi Arabia to provide Pakistan with a \$6 billion aid package, which was four times the size of the country's first loan from that year<sup>106</sup>. This package, which includes a \$3 billion delayed payment facility for up to a year and \$3 billion in balance-of-payment support, had been essential in giving Pakistan breathing room amid its present economic crisis.<sup>107</sup>

A more fascinating development was Saudi Arabia's determination to strategically build a \$10 billion oil refinery in Pakistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, further encroaching development in Pakistan.<sup>108</sup> The regional energy and security landscape may very likely shift as a result of this investment. The Saudi side had also committed to funding power generation projects and expressed interest in making investments in the petrochemical, mining, construction, power generation, and agricultural sectors.<sup>109</sup> The establishment of a coordination council to supervise the effective execution of these projects in Gwadar, an important coastal city in Pakistan's southwest whose port China had developed as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, was also crucial. The regional energy and security landscape may very likely shift as a result of this investment. The Saudi side had also committed to funding power generation projects and expressed interest in making investments in the petrochemical, mining, construction, power generation, and agricultural sectors. It is also necessary to formalize this collaboration by establishing a coordinating council to supervise how these projects are carried out in practice.<sup>110</sup>

Recently, the Pakistan leadership has been markedly engaging with the Gulf countries keeping economics at the forefront in a clear shift from focus on geo-politics and geo-economics.<sup>111</sup> Recent visits include, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's trips to the Emirates, Iran and Iraq.<sup>112</sup> During these visits, apart from increasing trade links, the focus was on highlighting the role

---

<sup>106</sup> "Pakistan expects UAE remittances to be slashed as pandemic hits migrant workers," CNBC, July 10, 2020.

<sup>107</sup> Cafiero, Giorgio; Wagner, Daniel (23 November 2015). "Saudi Arabia and Pakistan's Evolving Alliance". Huffington Post. Retrieved 27 January 2016.)

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Lacey, Robert. Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's closest Muslim and Non-Arab ally, Pakistan, 2009

of Pakistani diaspora as well as countering rising Islamophobia.<sup>113</sup> The pragmatic approach on part of the leadership in Islamabad in terms of its outreach to the Gulf had been given further impetus by the Covid19 pandemic, as a result of which a significant number of Pakistani expats in the Gulf had to return to their home country and now were seeking opportunities to return.

For instance, with almost 1.6 million foreigners, the second-largest Pakistani diaspora community in the Gulf was located in the Emirates.<sup>114</sup> the UAE's remittances, which total \$4.6 billion annually on average, were crucial to Pakistan's economy. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the Foreign Minister's trip to Iran comes in the backdrop of the recent China-Iran deal which betokens many opportunities for Pakistan as well especially in the arenas of energy and trade.<sup>115</sup>

### **3.4 Opportunities in Saudi Vision 2030 for Pakistan**

The Saudi Vision 2030 plan was developed by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman to wean the nation off its dependency on the oil sector. Built on eight pillars which include healthcare, tourism, agriculture and enabling the private sector- the Saudi government is endeavoring to enhance non- oil revenue to SAR 1 trillion by 2030. Without a doubt, Pakistan's bilateral engagements with time had been increasingly economic oriented. Case in point the Foreign Minister's visits to the UAE and Iran recently. In a world facing growing economic crisis compounded by the Covid 19 pandemic, utilizing all economic opportunities is the need of the hour. For Pakistan, creating a niche within Saudi Vision 2030 is of critical importance.<sup>116</sup>

For Pakistan the remittance sector was of vital importance. Almost 86 percent of Pakistan's secondary income comprises of remittances of which almost 60 percent come from the Gulf countries, predominately the UAE and Saudi Arabia.<sup>117</sup> Hence, in line with the needs of the Saudi Vision 2030, the Pakistani leadership must focus on providing the required skill set and training to its workers. Moreover, similar to as it had done in Kuwait, Pakistan can export its health care workers to the Kingdom in line with the latter's medical needs. The Middle East Green Initiative, just started, and the Saudi Green Initiative, which were modelled after Clean and Green Pakistan in Pakistan,

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> Saudi Gazette "Grand welcome for Saudi Crown Prince in Pakistan". 2019-02-17. Retrieved 2019-02- 21)

<sup>117</sup> Genin, Aaron. "A GLOBAL, SAUDI SOFT POWER OFFENSIVE: A SAUDI PRINCESS AND DOLLAR DIPLOMACY". The California Review. Retrieved 2019-04-04)

demonstrate that environmental cooperation is a developing field where both parties can work together.<sup>118</sup> (King Abdullah pays a state visit to Pakistan to conclude his tour of Asia. <sup>119</sup>On June 18, 2008, the original version was archived. Cities that were climate wise and conserve water are two examples. Pakistan can tap into Saudi Arabia's food industry. The latter imports 80 percent of its food needs and thus, Pakistan had an opportunity to ally with the Kingdom, especially in the export of dairy products, fruits and vegetables. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were negotiating the sending of combat soldiers to defend the kingdom. There may be up to 70,000 Pakistanis serving in the Saudi armed services at any given moment, according to analysts, despite the fact that the kingdom, like other Persian Gulf nations, did not publicly release these figures.<sup>120</sup> Vision 2030 aims for economic diversification - a plan which would need new markets and trade routes. In this regard, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) offers a number of possibilities for trade with Central Asia, East Asia and the Far East. Moreover, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under CPEC provide fertile grounds for Saudi investment especially in the field of agriculture.<sup>121</sup>

Pakistan had immense experience in the sports industry. Regarding manufacturing of sports items, export of sport goods to Saudi Arabia should be explored. Moreover, Pakistan had a renowned status in cricket, hockey, and squash. Keeping in mind that Vision 2030 lays special emphasis on promotion of sports, Pakistan can use this status as leverage to enter in the Saudi sports industry.<sup>122</sup> The two nations signed the following agreements:<sup>123</sup>

- Air Service Contract,

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> Country-Wise Remittances. State Bank of Pakistan, King Abdullah ends Asian tour with state visit to Pakistan". Archived from the original on June 18, 2008)

<sup>120</sup> Ibid

<sup>121</sup> Freeman, Colin; Khan, Taimur, "Pakistan in talks with Saudi Arabia to send combat troops to protect the kingdom". The National. Although the kingdom, like other Persian Gulf countries, does not make

<sup>122</sup> Tertrais, Bruno (July 2012). "Pakistan's Nuclear and WMD Programmes: Status, Evolution and Risks" (PDF). Non-Proliferation Papers. EU Non-Proliferation Consortium (19): 16. Archived from the original (PDF) on 1 August 2012. Retrieved 19 April 2013.

<sup>123</sup> Tertrais, Bruno (July 2012). "Pakistan's Nuclear and WMD Programmes: Status, Evolution and Risks" (PDF). Non-Proliferation Papers. EU Non-Proliferation Consortium (19): 16. Archived from the original (PDF) on 1 August 2012. Retrieved 19 April 2013.

- Friendship Treaty,
- Collaboration between the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) and the Pakistani Associate Press (APP)
- Cooperation in Culture
- Military Cooperation Security Cooperation Agreement
- Consensus on international political dialogues
- Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology

The following agreements will also soon be finalized:

- Agreement for Security Cooperation in Countering Crime.
- An agreement to work together to stop the unlawful trafficking of drugs and psychotropic substances.
- An agreement between two countries' ministries in charge of religious issues.
- The Agreement for the Transfer of Offenders.
- Foreign funding

Mutual collaborations which align Saudi Vision 2030 and Pakistan's development goals provides ideal catalysts for change.<sup>124</sup> However, successful implementation will had to be congruent with efficient and effective follow- ups from both sides otherwise putting ink to paper and mere rhetoric will be no one's benefit. The friendship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia was exceptional, and they were always willing to help one another. A couple of the facets of this alliance include investment commitments and economic cooperation. This devotion spans the military, political, and strategic spheres. Saudi Arabia anticipates more military cooperation from Pakistan, especially because of the impending dangers in the Middle East.<sup>125</sup>

The Saudi and Pakistani militaries cooperate on almost every front, including military training through coordinated drills and exercises. Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman's visit in 2019

---

<sup>124</sup> Arwa Ibrahim, Pakistani Prime Minister Khan visits Saudi Arabia to reset ties, May, 2021.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid

strengthened already-existing connections between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia while also opening up a number of long-term and new paths for engagement.<sup>126</sup> The establishment of this connection aimed at helping both countries refocus their strategic relationships in light of the emergence of new alliances and the fast-changing geopolitical environment. Under rapidly shifting regional and global geopolitical scenarios, the Pakistan-Saudi relationship needs to strengthen further.<sup>127</sup>

The traditional bondage must be supplemented by innovative strategies and mechanisms in strategic relations. The stability and longevity of the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia must be reinforced through more institutional and individual participation. The relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia requires new dynamism and diversification through more political engagement, institutional partnerships, and diplomatic overtures. In addition to protecting one another's national interests, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia can maintain their unwavering support for one another's positions on issues affecting the region and the world.

---

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

<sup>127</sup> Ibid

## 4. Chapter 4

### Pakistan's Relations with Iran

#### 4.1 Foundation of Pakistan-Iran Relations

The first nation to acknowledge Pakistan's independence was Iran. One of the first countries to recognize the new regime after Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 was Pakistan. The two countries had supported one another through crucial moments in their respective histories. There are strong linguistic, cultural, and historical ties between Pakistan and Iran.<sup>128</sup> These linkages were well demonstrated by the old Persian poetry that can be seen on many contemporary buildings in Pakistan today. The countries rapidly formed a strong relationship, which they formally formalized in 1950.<sup>129</sup> Throughout the Cold War, they remained allies, and under the Shah, they had the same strategic outlook. The Afghan civil war, sectarian strife, US influence over Pakistan, Iranian sanctions, and Pakistan's ties to Saudi Arabia have all put the warmth in the two countries' relations to the test.<sup>130</sup> Iran was essential for Pakistan since it has a lack of energy and was rich in natural resources like oil and gas. Pakistan had a 209 million people and a \$1,560 per capita income.<sup>131</sup> It was a developing economy with an estimated real growth rate of 5.83% and a \$313 billion GDP<sup>132</sup>. Two-thirds of jobs and one-fifth of production in Pakistan's economy were employed in the agriculture sector. Only 19% of its output was accounted for by the industrial sector, and 56.3% was provided by the services industry.<sup>133</sup> Over 50% of Pakistan's exports were made up of textiles and garments.<sup>134</sup> With exports of about \$21 billion and imports of \$48.51 billion, the nation was face with a significant trade deficit.<sup>135</sup>

The analysis of non-economic ties between the two neighboring nations was attempted in the next

---

<sup>128</sup> Today, P. Pak, Iran, Turkey establishing road, rail networks to boost trans-regional trade. 2017..

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>130</sup> Officials. "Pak-Iran Relations Since Islamic Revolution: Genesis [sic] of Cooperation and Competition". Embassy of Iran, Islamabad. Archived from the original on 10 April 2013. Retrieved 25 November 2012

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> Max Fisher. "Iran is popular in Pakistan, overwhelmingly disliked everywhere else". The Washington Post. Retrieved 19 March 2013

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

section.<sup>136</sup>

## 4.2 Developments in Pak-Iran Relationship

Each of the neighbors reacted promptly in 2016 when Western powers eased the sanctions. To bolster their mutual efforts that had been hindered by sanctions, Pakistan and Iran started exchange visits. They aimed to enhance military collaboration as well as other forms of cooperation. On July 16, 2018, Iranian Chief of General Staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri arrived in Pakistan, supporting their operations.<sup>137</sup> Although Iran was wary of Pakistan's ties to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran were attempting to work together to construct a junction between the Chabahar and Gwadar ports.<sup>138</sup> This agreement could benefit the millions of Pakistanis who live in poverty. A senior Iranian team went to the Karachi Port Trust on April 13 in an effort to boost business and maritime investment. The Iranian delegation, led by the Minister of Roads and Urbanization, expressed interest in collaborating to promote religious tourism and transshipment cargo processing via the link between the ports of Karachi and Bandar Abbas. In terms of politics, the economics, and defense, the Iranian commander voiced a desire for continued cooperation between the two neighbors.

After Pakistan's Former Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif visited Iran in September 2017, the two neighboring countries continued their collaboration on the Afghan issue with the Iranian commander's visit. Baluchistan and the province of Sistan form the shared border between Pakistan and Iran. For the survival of both countries, border security is a constant concern. The Pak-Iran Joint Border Commission did, however, resolve a number of border security-related issues and efforts at a recent meeting Iran and Pakistan sought to work together on a number of fronts. Furthermore, both nations work together to combat corruption, which was a threat to progress. In order to work together on anti-corruption initiatives in the two neighboring nations, the Iranian Attorney General traveled to Islamabad to meet with the head of the National Accountability Bureau. Additionally, Pakistan might save \$71 million a year by stopping the smuggling of oil, however that seems unfeasible given the shortage of security personnel. The two neighboring

---

<sup>136</sup> Pakistan dispatches humanitarian assistance to flood hit Iran". Mehr News Agency. 10 April 2019.

<sup>137</sup> Pak-Iran Relations Since Islamic Revolution: Genesis of Cooperation and Competition". Embassy of Iran, Islamabad. Archived from the original on 10 April 2013. Retrieved 25 November 2012

<sup>138</sup> Ibid

nations serious efforts persisted in their resolve.<sup>139</sup> The president of the Iranian Industry visited the Peshawar Chamber of Commerce in August 2016 and pledged to improve economic relations. In addition, Pakistan maintained its neutral stance with Qatar, a close friend of Iran and was able to win a gas agreement, in contrast to other Muslim nations who boycotted Doha as part of the blockade against Qatar. For example, the Pakistani parliament's decision to maintain neutrality in the Saudi-led war in Yemen and to refrain from providing troops to fight in it in 2015 helped Pakistan gain Iranian confidence.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, Pakistan highlighted its concerns and outright denounced the decision after the US announced it will leave the JCPOA.

### **4.3 Religious Factor in Pakistan's Relations with Iran**

In the early years of Pakistan, both the pragmatic foreign policy and the body politics speech were liberal to a large extent. The majority of Pakistan's early leaders belonged to the Shia branch of Islam, but they were unaware of the Shia-Sunni divide that would later cause problems for relations between the two nations. Quaid-I-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the man who founded Pakistan, belongs to the Shia school of thought. Shi'a Muslims included President Sikandar Mirza, General Yahya Khan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, and later Asif Ali Zardari. As a result, there was theological congruence between the leaderships of Pakistan and Iran, and they may harbor sentiments of affection for one another. However, the early leadership of Pakistan and Iran had a secular and Western mindset, which created other opportunities for strong ties. Both Pakistan and Iran were CENTO members and both countries had pro-Western foreign policy. The historical links and shared religious and linguistic history between Pakistan and Iran serve as the foundation for their bilateral relations. In general, ties between Iran and Pakistan have remained positive.

### **4.4 Iranian Revolution and its Impact on the of Shia's Community in Pakistan**

Iranian leaders wanted to offset Saudi influence in Pakistan and widen their sphere of influence there. As a result, many politicized Pakistani Shi'as continue to had a pro-Iran viewpoint. Writings supporting the Khomeini administration in Iran may be found in abundance on several Shi'a websites and books in Pakistan.<sup>141</sup> The fact that pilgrims from Zaire visit holy sites in Iran was another shared

---

<sup>139</sup> Pakistan dispatches humanitarian assistance to flood hit Iran". Mehr News Agency. 10 April 2019.

<sup>140</sup> Hunter, Shireen. Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order. Since then, Pakistan's sectarian tensions have been a major irritant in Iranian-Pakistan relations, 2010.

<sup>141</sup> Andreas, T. Rieck, The Shia's of Pakistan; An Assertive and Beleaguered Minority, December 2018



religious characteristic. Before one can comprehend the core causes of the Iranian revolution, it was necessary to first comprehend how Iran's Shi'a ulema had impacted civil society. This effect was seen during the 1891 Tobacco Protests.<sup>142</sup> The demonstrations started after the Shah gave monopoly concessions to a British business over the manufacture and sale of tobacco in Iran. These concessions significantly reduced the Iranian farmers means of sustenance.<sup>143</sup> Iran's oil fields were nationalized by Mossadegh after he was democratically elected as the country's leader. Reza Pahlavi toppled Mossadegh and subsequently had him restored to the Iranian king, hence the Iranian people did not like this. Reza's modernization program, which essentially substituted Western cultural norms for Islamic ones, did not appear to improve the situation either. Additionally, the Pahlavi dynasty was seen by the Iranian people as little more than a set up by the West, dangerously endangering Iranian sovereignty. Reza Shah Pahlavi carried out a number of western-inspired changes in the 1960s. The phrase used to describe it was "White Revolution." In his view, the old system would be overthrown and a new period of equality would begin, thus he intended to usher in a new era of modernity.<sup>144</sup>

On the other side, the White Revolution sparked fresh social disputes that contributed to the emergence of many of the issues the Shah had been seeking to prevent. But the Shah was ignorant of this. Due to his reforms, the intelligentsia and urban working class, which had previously presented the biggest dangers to the Shah's monarchy, more than quadrupled in size. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a leading Shia religious figure, was one of the measures most outspoken critics. After harshly denouncing the Shah and his policies, he declared himself in exile. Only the opposition to the Shah and his regime made Khomeini more popular.<sup>145</sup>

Only extensive unemployment had resulted from the economic measures, which had drawn more disgruntled young people to Khomeini and his movement. The notion that Iranians should defy Western control and go back to their cultural and religious traditions, on the other hand, has gained popularity thanks to Ayatollah Khomeini. The populace thought that the Government Secret Service, SAVAK, had killed him even though a heart attack was listed as the reason of death. This just helped to strengthen Khomeini's reputation and fuel additional demonstrations. In the ensuing altercation

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

<sup>144</sup> Kramer, Martin (1996), "Khomeini's Messengers in Mecca," in Martin Kramer, Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival, New Brunswick: Transaction, pp. 161-87.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid

with the police, two demonstrators reportedly lost their lives, according to government sources. However, about 700 people were hurt, according to sources in the opposing government.<sup>146</sup> The Shah's rule was the target of protests that extended beyond memorial services for the deceased. Hundreds of thousands would protest during the burial procession. More protests broke out in the nation, and the government responded by killing people, giving the Iranian revolution worrisome momentum. Armed street battles between guerrillas and rebel forces on February 11, 1979, led to the defeat of Shah-supporting soldiers and the installation of Khomeini as the rightful leader. Khomeini proclaimed Iran to be an Islamic republic on April 1, 1979, after a national vote that received resounding approval. Conservative social values were upheld as a result. Throughout 1979, the Revolutionary Guards wiped out any political resistance to the Ayatollah and the clergy. A new constitution gave the "Rahbar," or leader, significant powers and formed a religious theocratic administration based on Khomeini's concept of *velayat-e faqh*, or leader; the influence of Western culture was restrained. The first "Rahbar" was Khomeini himself.<sup>147</sup>

#### **4.5 Indian Factor and the Compulsions of Pakistan's Foreign Policy**

The close Indo-Iranian ties were another area of strategic concern in Pakistan's Middle East strategy. Over the period of 35 years, as New Delhi and Tehran continuously improved their bilateral collaboration, a partnership between India and Iran gradually developed.<sup>148</sup> For instance, the India-Iran Strategic Dialogue Conference, held in 2001, focused on regional and global security issues as well as the two nations' different military strategies. The signing of the New Delhi Charter and seven Memorandums of Understanding promoting trade, information exchange, cooperation in technology and science, and counterterrorism by the former president of Iran,<sup>149</sup> Mohammad Khatami, in New Delhi in 2003 may have been the most significant bilateral development to date. Washington and Riyadh do not entirely concur on Beijing, despite the fact that both countries have an interest in curbing China's regional dominance. Many officials in the Trump administration think that the Indo Republic of Iran on the international stage. As a result of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to

---

<sup>146</sup> *ibid*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>148</sup> Safdar Sial, *An Analysis of Emerging Pakistani-Iranian Ties*, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, April 2015

<sup>149</sup> Shah Alam, "Iran Pakistan Relations: Political and Strategic Dimensions," *Strategic Analysis* 28, no. 4 (2004): 528.

India in February 2018, the Indo-Iranian alliance was enhanced. New Delhi was given oversight of the Chabahar port on Iran's eastern coast for an 18-month period. Additionally, 56 miles from the Pakistani port of Gwadar, there are projects worth \$200 billion that are being managed by China and offer a transit route to Afghanistan without passing through Pakistan. Particularly after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Iran and remarks that "Chabahar port can become an important symbol that reflects the depth of cooperation relations between Iran and India," the distinction of India-Iran bilateral relations became clear. Since our friendship dates back to the beginning of time, India and Iran are not new friends (Modi's Iran visit: PM quotes Ghalib, celebrates dosti between New Delhi and Tehran - Politics News, first post, 2016).<sup>150</sup> Modi started a new chapter in Indo-Iranian relations with these comments. With the so-called Iranian Nuclear Agreement, India had enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity to develop strategic, military, technological, commercial, political, and cultural partnerships with Iran in response to the "Comprehensive Joint Action Plan" lifting international sanctions imposed on Tehran in exchange for its consent to suspend its nuclear program and to receive visits from international inspectors.

India was the second-largest importer of thermal coal and the third-largest energy consumer, and at the same time, it was in desperate need of energy resources to meet the rising domestic energy demand, according to a 2019 report titled "Coal in India" by the Australian Ministry of Industry, Innovation and Science. With the Chabahar Agreement's signature, which calls for building a railroad to reach the Iranian region of Zahedan, India enjoys unique access to energy resources that extend from southeast Iran to Central Asia. And the goals don't end there. By relying on the port of Chabahar, India was putting out the idea of establishing a global transportation route that connects the north and the south and is run jointly by Tehran, Moscow, and New Delhi. This international route was intended to transport cargo between India and Europe via Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia in both directions.<sup>151</sup> Additionally, it was opening up new markets for both Indian consumer goods and human capital. Simultaneously, India was to offer Iran and Central Asia low-cost material and technological support for the construction of highways, ports, railway projects, and military capacities. New Delhi

---

<sup>150</sup> Pakistan's Balancing Act between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Asia Times, February 12, 2016.

<sup>151</sup> Safdar Sial, An Analysis of Emerging Pakistani-Iranian Ties, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre 3-4, April 2015

was shown an interest in using its partnerships to counter religious extremism in addition to creating strategic economic alliances.

India's Muslim minority, which numbers about 200 million people, was the country's largest minority. Along with this, India was still dealing with the growing animosity and polarization between Muslims and Hindus, which was exemplified by the protests and riots in New Delhi in January 2020. It was anticipated that the bilateral ties between Tehran and New Delhi would significantly benefit Iran's struggling economy.<sup>152</sup>

In fact, India was supposed to put Iran in a stronger position to be a successful international trade partner and a powerful political ally. The Indo-Iranian alliance helps, at least in part, to counter China's regional goals, which had significant repercussions for Saudi Arabia. While Riyadh wants to increase commerce and access to Indian markets, it did not want to obstruct American efforts to control the Chinese New Silk Road or American policy toward India and the Pacific Basin.<sup>141</sup> The area was currently at a perilous turning point. Either the Yemeni issue was resolved and efforts were made to defuse tensions in order to find a compromise acceptable to all parties, or it will result in a worsening of the situation by involving additional nations in the ongoing conflict, which heightens its ferocity and severity. The combatants were aware that any escalation in the battle will pull the entire region into a protracted conflict that engulfs everyone and everything and lasts for many years. Thus, attempts to find a mutually agreeable solution to the problem that threatens the Arab region and the Middle East as a whole may be successful. The Riyadh leadership was aware that the longer the Yemeni crisis lasts, the more difficult things will get, particularly given Yemen's diverse geographic and demographic makeup. As Saudi Arabia in the past urged the late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to counter Iranian influence following the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran,<sup>153</sup> Riyadh believes that Iran aims to besiege it. Foreign policy decision-makers in Pakistan should take note of these developments because Iran openly supports Pakistan on the Kashmir issue while allowing Indian presence on its soil, which might be utilized against Pakistan's security. In a financial and theological context, Saudi Arabia had special significance for Pakistan, yet it keeps quiet on the Kashmir issue.

---

<sup>152</sup> Zia Ur Rehman, *The Baluch Insurgency: Linking Iran to Pakistan* (Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center: NOREF Report, May 2014).

<sup>153</sup> Saman Zulfiqar, "India-Afghanistan Strategic Relations: Implications for Pakistan," *IPRI Insight*, Vol. 1, no.1 (2013): 14-22.

#### 4.6 Pakistan's Economic Interests with Iran

Economic collaborations strengthen the strategic ties between two countries. But Pakistan and Iran's economic interests had been more knitted with strategic and security concerns. The security and shared strategic interests had been the Centre of the Pakistan-Iran relationship. The two nations political and economic interactions had traditionally taken place in the background of this security paradigm.<sup>154</sup> There was confidence between both nations' official institutions and decision-making circles before to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The relationship became even more security-focused after 1979, when this equation underwent a profound transformation that gave rise to completely new political realities in both Iran and Pakistan. National security was given even more weight in shaping the form of bilateral connections due to the prominence of the security institutions of both nations within the decision-making structures.<sup>155</sup> Two of the most crucial techniques for trade facilitation were the development of infrastructure and increased connectivity. Additionally, freight services had already started on the Pakistani railway between Zahidan, Iran, and Quetta, Pakistan. The decision to reactivate the "Gul Train," a cargo train that travels between Istanbul and Islamabad, was still up in the air.<sup>156</sup> Another endeavor to expand infrastructure capacity and improve transportation is the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA).<sup>157</sup> Another effort to boost infrastructure capacity and encourage infrastructure development was the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA). It was an intentional effort to reduce transportation costs by accelerating transportation services through the modernization and harmonization of transit transport in the region. Due to the lack of financial linkages after US embargoes on Iran, the uncomfortable and indirect commercial route via the UAE was a significant obstacle in bilateral commerce between Pakistan and Iran.<sup>158</sup> However, Pakistan now had new opportunities to rebuild business ties with Iran thanks to Iran's 2015 deal to curb its nuclear program and the following relaxation of some sanctions in 2016.<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> Choudhary, L.K. (1974) Pakistan as a factor in Indo-Iranian relations, *Indian Journal of Political Science*, 35(4): 352–61.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>156</sup> Security Council, U. N. Security Council Imposes Sanctions on Iran for Failure to Halt Uranium Enrichment, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1737 (2006).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>159</sup> Alam, S. Iran-Pakistan relations: Political and strategic dimensions. *Strategic Analysis*, 2004 28(4), 526- 545.

However, Pakistani banks continue to be hesitant to assist their Iranian counterparts due to some ongoing US sanctions. To address this issue, the central banks of both countries signed a "payment arrangement" agreement in April 2017.<sup>160</sup> To promote trade, the central banks agreed to permit select banks in their respective countries to accept yen or euro transactions. Additionally, in order to facilitate bilateral trade, both nations had agreed to bring about a currency swap arrangement.

#### **4.7 Iran-Pakistan (IP) Gas Pipeline**

Early in the 1990s, the IP gas pipeline was conceived. Originally, it was a project to build a gas pipeline between Iran, India, and Pakistan, but later in 2009, India withdrew over concerns about pricing and security.<sup>161</sup> The IP gas pipeline project intends to transport natural gas from Iran to Pakistan over a distance of about 1900 kilometers. Iran will construct and operate a 1150 km long IP gas pipeline route that runs from Asalyuyeh to the Iranian border. Pakistan was responsible for building the remaining segment, which is around 780 kilometers long and runs from the Makran-Coastal Highway to the Nawab Shah offtake point.<sup>162</sup> For a nation like Pakistan, which lacks sufficient electricity, this initiative was significant. The IP gas pipeline was the most feasible and environmental friendly project among the alternatives being considered to meet energy needs in terms of price and location. The fact that the project was anticipated to generate about \$200 million in direct income speaks volumes about its significance.

The need for this project had grown significantly over time as a result of Pakistan's rising energy consumption and the persistent supply-demand gap. Unfortunately, it took close to two decades before the IP gas pipeline project's final agreement was signed. In Turkey in March 2010, both parties signed the final agreement. The project was scheduled to begin before October 2012 and conclude by the end of December 2014, according to a September 2012 announcement.<sup>163</sup> Iran had already completed their half of the project, while Pakistan had not begun it due to an inadequate finding. Investors were apprehensive to fund the IP gas line project as a result of US sanctions on Iran. The US repeatedly expressed its displeasure with the project and threatened to prevent Pakistan from doing business with Iran. In order to achieve its goals, the US continually adopted a severe position on the IP gas pipeline project and attempted to stop Pakistan from finishing it. In addition, it

---

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

<sup>161</sup> Choudhary, L.K. (1974) Pakistan as a factor in Indo-Iranian relations, *Indian Journal of Political Science*, 35(4): 352–61

<sup>162</sup> Ibid

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

engaged Pakistan in replacement projects like the TAPI gas pipeline project.<sup>164</sup> Despite US backing, there the TAPI pipeline was unlikely to be completed despite US funding because to security concerns in Afghanistan. Pakistan is completely aware of how important the IP pipeline project which is why it resisted US pressure to terminate the project while India withdrew at the same time (Baloch).<sup>165</sup> Pakistan, however, runs the possibility of having to pay Iran fines because the development was not finished on schedule. Although both parties have yet to sign a formal agreement, the China Petroleum Pipeline Bureau (CPPB) said in 2016 that it is willing to contribute cash for the completion of the 80 km from Gwadar to the Iranian border that had not yet been built. The IP gas pipeline must be finished if commercial links between Pakistan and Iran were to be strengthened.<sup>155</sup>

#### **4.8 International Pressure Concerning Ties with Iran**

##### **4.8.1 Pakistan-Iran relations and the US factor**

Studyig US-Iran ties was necessary to comprehend Iran-Pakistan relations. The two main problems that lead to tension between Iran and the US are oil and nuclear technology. The globe witnessed strong connections between Iran and the United States after Pakistan attained independence. Ironically, the US was the country that gave Iran its first research reactor in the 1960s when Iran began its "Atoms for Peace" nuclear technology program in the 1950s.<sup>166</sup> The US was anxious to identify investment prospects in Iran during the oil crisis of the 1970s, notably a nuclear power facility. Under the Islamic rule, the agreements the Shah had made with the US on the nuclear program were revoked. The US did not give much thought to Iran's nuclear program up until it stated in 2002 that Iran had advanced its nuclear fuel cycle technology.<sup>167</sup> The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) recognized Iran's complete cooperation to maintain the transparency of its nuclear initiatives in its 2003 report.<sup>168</sup> The US views Iran as a significant threat to its dominance in the Gulf. Additionally, in reaction to Iran's poor answer to its demand that it ceases its nuclear program, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on the nation in 2006.

Iran was essential to Pakistan's economy and security because of the two countries' long-

---

<sup>164</sup> Ibid

<sup>165</sup> ibid

<sup>166</sup> Ibid

<sup>167</sup> Ahmed Montazeran and Kashif Mumtaz, 'Iran-Pakistan: Cooperation for Regional Stability and Peace', *Strategic Studies*, 24(1), 2004, p. 75) Until 2002.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid

standing links. Pakistan chose not to join a military coalition against Iraq. The relationship between Pakistan and Iran was impacted by US resistance to the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project. Some academics contend that in 1984, the US gave Pakistan the opportunity to destabilize Iran through Baluchistan. Without a question, the US factor had a significant influence on how Pakistan-Iran ties are evolving. To preserve friendly ties with a resourceful neighbor, Pakistan had to put up with US pressure. Following the relaxation of sanctions on Iran, there has been a lot of enthusiasm from Tehran and Islamabad to work together for mutual benefits during the previous two years. The United States was displeased with the growing friendships and meetings between the leaders of Pakistan and Iran, and it had specifically encouraged Pakistan to steer clear of Iran. On August 6, President Trump announced two phases of sanctions on Iran. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, often known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, was terminated by Trump in May. In this situation, Pakistan would face challenging barriers in furthering its collaboration with Iran.

Iran and Pakistan's relationship had a tumultuous history and had seen significant change throughout time. There are now several challenges to keeping Pakistan and Iran in good times. Furthermore, Pakistan and Iran had not yet realized their full economic potential despite being near neighbors. However, both countries are making efforts to improve strained relations since they recognize each other's importance in the area. Negotiations and agreements, whether they were continuing or active, demonstrate a desire to go forward on both sides. The long-standing IP gas pipeline project must be completed as quickly as possible if the two nations are to deepen their economic connections. A country like Pakistan that lacks energy benefits most from this endeavor. Additionally, for the trade potential to be fully realized, actions taken to address the issues of high tariffs, a lack of financial channels, and increased infrastructure connectivity must become reality. In addition, trade may be the defining aspect of relations between Pakistan and Iran.<sup>169</sup> Trade ties were severely harmed by the sanctions against Iran and plummeted below \$50 million. To lessen the impact of US sanctions, both nations must look into other viable payment options, such as commerce in local currencies. Additionally, the US policy toward Iran consistently impeded commercial ties between Pakistan and Iran. The US's recent decision to leave the JCPOA has major ramifications for relations between Pakistan and Iran. In this circumstance, developing continuous cooperation with

---

<sup>169</sup> Hussain, F. and Hussain, M. (2017) China–Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its geopolitical paradigms, *International Journal of Social Sciences, Humanities and Education*, 1(2): 79–95.



Iran will provide tough obstacles for Pakistan's newly elected administration. By considering other options, Pakistan had to reduce its losses following the US exit from the JCPOA.<sup>170</sup> The influence of China may be crucial in this regard. In the end, this will lessen US influence in the region and aid in bringing the two countries together due to the rising importance of China in the region and the implementation of CPEC.<sup>171</sup> Additionally, including Iran in CPEC would strengthen the country's economic and security relations. However, Pakistan's new administration continues to face significant difficulties in balancing relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia.

---

<sup>170</sup> Ibid

<sup>171</sup> Ibid

## 5 Chapter 5

### Implications of Saudi-Iran Rivalry for Pakistan's Foreign Policy

#### 5.1 Introduction

Pakistan's foreign policy was shaped and influenced by its regional neighbors, India, Afghanistan, Iran and China. The geographical and geopolitical dynamics of Pakistan always play a significant role in Pakistan's domestic and foreign relations. For decades, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been engaged in a fierce rivalry for Middle Eastern power and influence. Ideology, nationalism, the struggle for regional hegemony, the struggle for control of the Islamic world, alliances with nations like the United States and Israel, the price of oil, and last but not least, sectarian conflicts are the prominent issues that resulted in proxy wars, economic contentions, political confrontations and the regional instability. Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, Lebanon, and Iraq were just a few of the Middle Eastern nations where proxy war is raging between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which both back opposing sides.<sup>172</sup> The Saudi-Iran strained relations had significant implications for Pakistan's foreign policy. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan had a cordial historical relation which always led Pakistan to extend its diplomatic, strategic and economic concerns with Saudi Arabia. On the other, Pakistan-Iran relations had been linked with regional dynamics. Both Pakistan and Iran share the border. But this regional neighborhood resulted more into confusions and conflicts than the cooperation. The Iran-Pakistan oil smuggling, sectarian politics, violence and religious terrorism were the most crucial issues. Beyond the Middle East and into South Asia, the bitter rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran has had a significant impact on Pakistan's economy, society, and security.<sup>173</sup>

#### 5.2 Implications for Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two powerful nations in the Muslim world had a significant influence on Pakistan that undoubtedly suffer irreparable consequences as a result of the animosity between the two countries. Pakistan's foreign policy faces significant difficulties in navigating its policy in the volatile Middle East. As a result, the bitter rivalry that exists between these two pillars of the Muslim world made it impossible for Pakistan to strike a balance between its relationships with Iran and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan faces a delicate situation balancing between both Iran and Saudi Arabia as

---

<sup>172</sup> Crossette B. Pakistanis agree to join defense of Saudi Arabia. New York Times. August 14, 1990.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid

both the states remain engaged in many proxy wars in the region. Beside other differences, Saudi Arabia and Iran had tough competition of interests concerning some regional issues. There were various examples of these conflicts of interest and Yemen, and Syria's crises were of the grounds for the contests.

### **5.1.1 The Yemen Crisis: A Dilemmatic Foreign Policy**

During Yemen crisis, Pakistan caught in a dilemmatic situation. It created a tough circumstance for Pakistan's policy makers as Saudi Arabia sought Pakistan's military assistance against Iran. Pakistan's parliament voted overwhelmingly to continue taking a neutral stance in the situation in Yemen. The relationship between Pakistan's civilian and military leaders and the Saudi royal family deteriorated and eventually broke down when Operation Decisive Storm's Saudi proposal to send soldiers to Yemen was denied by the Pakistani parliament in 2015.<sup>174</sup> The lack of assistance the Saudis received from the Nawaz Sharif administration, which had served as their principal political representative in Pakistan for decades, greatly infuriated them. The Pakistani Armed Forces Command's active engagement in military alliances and greater security cooperation have strengthened relations. Many Pakistani military agreed with this position. Sending Pakistani military to Saudi Arabia was also vehemently opposed by the general public, which was still reeling from the Afghanistan War and the Western Global War on Terror. However, just 15 months had elapsed before Saudi Arabian-led Islamic Military Coalition to Combat Terrorism commander General Reheel Sharif, a retired general and former head of the Pakistani army, was chosen to thwart Houthi rebel attacks in Yemen.<sup>175</sup> The new Saudi defense minister, Mohammed bin Salman, who ultimately rose to the position of crown prince, and successive Pakistani military leaders established a cooperative relationship. General Reheel Sharif replaced Saudi Arabia as the head of the Islamic Military Coalition to Combat Terrorism after the latter's resignation as commander of the Pakistani Army. General Qamar Javed Bajwa, who also spent three years in Saudi Arabia, succeeded him in Pakistan. He held the position of Pakistan's ninth chief of army staff from November 29, 2016, until November 29, 2022. Bajwa had a significant role in both the political and defense aspects of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. He visited the Kingdom on more than six occasions.

The Houthi rebel's decision to oust an elected President and take control of key areas in 2015

---

<sup>174</sup> Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Vinay Kaura, "India and Iran: Challenges and Opportunity," *The Diplomat*, September 11, 2015.

marked the beginning of the crisis in Yemen. The neighboring GCC states and the entire world found this unacceptable. The rebels had established a perilous precedent by questioning the law. Pakistan is appropriately concerned and supports international efforts to bring peace to Yemen because the conflict had the potential to spread. As the conflict enters its seventh year and had already caused a significant humanitarian crisis and many deaths, the need for peace had become even more pressing. In addition, Pakistan is of the firm belief that legitimate governments should not be overthrown by means of external intervention or force. In 1971, Pakistan itself was the target of such interventions. Saudi Arabia had led efforts to bring peace to Yemen in recent months. In March of last year, it presented a peace plan that called for an all-encompassing cease-fire. It had recently reiterated the same strategy and requested that Hodeida seaport activities be restored for humanitarian assistance and that Sana'a airport be reopened to flights. The Kingdom's efforts had received support from the UN Secretary General. Sadly, however, the rebels had not paid much attention, and their primary motivation is avarice for oil resources in the area of Marib, the historic city. For a few months, fighting had been going on in and around this government-controlled area. In a public statement issued in March, Pakistan's foreign ministry expressed its support for the Kingdom's peace initiative and referred to it as a comprehensive road map for peace. Additionally, it urged all parties to engage in a "meaningful dialogue" to prevent additional destruction and deaths. Special Assistant on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East for Prime Minister Imran Khan, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, also expressed full support for the Kingdom's peace efforts. He also praised the diplomatic efforts made in this regard by the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait. Pakistan is fully aware of Yemen's significance and the rebels' efforts to disrupt peace in neighboring nations. Pakistan had repeatedly shown its support for Saudi Arabia, which is central to the Islamic world and essential to international energy supplies. The Kingdom has successfully supported Yemeni legitimacy in international forums and successfully defended itself militarily, despite rebel control of some areas in the north and their drone attacks.

The 2015 resolution adopted by the Pakistani parliament. It had stated that it stood in complete solidarity with the Kingdom in defending the Holy Harmain and expressed concern that the turmoil in Yemen could spread to the region. The resolution had stressed the necessity of a negotiated settlement and Pakistan's close ties to the GCC. In the Middle East and the larger Islamic world, Pakistan's policy had been to ease tensions and foster unity. Pakistan opposes all forms of extremism and terrorism, as well as the actions of non-state actors against internationally recognized legitimate governments. That is also the position on a global scale. All member nations of the United Nations

share the same points of view. A different position will contribute to global chaos. Pakistan will fully support any international effort to promote peace in Yemen that seeks to do so.

### **5.1.2 Pakistan's Stance on the Syrian War**

Pakistan adopted a policy of neutrality when the Syrian Civil War began and campaigned for its non-belligerent stance in the conflict. In order to speed up the exchange of delegations at the government and private levels in the political and economic sectors, President Asif Zardari visited Syria in 2010 as part of a state visit. He met with President Bashar al-Assad and signed a trade contract that year. Pakistan eventually adopted a policy of neutrality when the Syrian Civil War began and campaigned for its non-belligerent stance in the conflict. The official position of Pakistan is to vehemently oppose using military force against Syria. Pakistan voted a resolution against Syria in the UN General Assembly but did not participate in the UNSC meeting, held a conference by the international community was encouraged during a conference hosted by Iran and Pakistan to respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Syria.<sup>176</sup>

Pakistan had urged the US and other western nations to refrain from intervening militarily in Syria. Aizaz Chaudhry, a spokesperson for the Foreign Office, insisted in a statement that Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty must be respected. Pakistan had underlined its grave concerns about the escalating violence and the looming possibility of potential American military intervention over an already troubled Syria. The alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government was also sharply denounced by the Pakistani Foreign Ministry. According to the Foreign Office, "All the involved parties should adopt course of dialogue instead of violence and peaceful resolution of the conflict should be sought after." Sartaj Aziz, the national security adviser, stated at the UN that Pakistan "condemns the use of chemical weapons, but it did not support aircraft operations as they are proposed by the United States as they will only make the situation "more serious." "We should wait for the UN mission's report on Syria," Aziz admonished the United States and the United Kingdom. Islamabad expressed support for "the formation of a transitional governing body with full executive powers enabling it to take charge of the affairs of the country". By December 2015, Pakistan's foreign ministry declared that it opposes any effort to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's administration. By 2018, the Pakistan International School of Damascus, which is run by the Pakistani Embassy, has established itself as a top institution in the nation.<sup>177</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup> Zehra, Nasim (August 2000). "Revitalizing Pakistan-Syria Policy". Pakistan Defence Journal Retrieved 28 August 2013

<sup>177</sup> Syrian crisis: Pakistan against any attempt to topple Bashar al-Assad". 24 December 2015.

### **5.3 Saudi-Iran Sectarian and Ethnic Differences: A threat to Pakistan National Security**

Pakistan was one of the worst affected countries of the ethnic conflict and sectarian rivalry since decades. The ethnic strife and religious ideological differences between Iran and Saudi Arabia had serious political and security concerns for Pakistan. The Iran was predominantly Shia Muslim country, whereas Saudi Arabia was a rigid Sunni Muslim identity. This sectarian divide puts Pakistan, with its own Sunni-Shia demographic mix, in a precarious situation. The elements from both countries had been also supporting their favorite sectarian groups in Pakistan. Saudi Arabia has been accused for covertly supporting groups/ outfits in Pakistan like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-e-Sahiba (SSP), Sepha Muhammad. Iran had been blamed for covertly supporting sectarian groups like Fatimoon and Zainaboon. These organizations were responsible for violent activities and sectarian attacks in different parts of the country. They had been also suspected of receiving funds from the respective societies and organizations.

Furthermore, there were series of religious seminaries and religious centers accused of receiving funds from respective countries-these were responsible for development of sectarian literature sectarian and terrorism based on religious extremism which is a bigger threat to internal security of Pakistan. The sectarian differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran even divide the people in Pakistan on sectarian lines. It was established among the policy elite and governing policy making that sectarian terrorism was more dangerous than general terrorism.<sup>178</sup> The reluctance of Pakistani politicians to take sides in the conflicts between Iran and the Arab world, particularly between Saudi Arabia and Iran, underscores their ongoing concern over sectarian and ethnic insurgencies within the country.

### **5.2 Sectarianism Strife**

Pakistan was primarily a Sunni-based country, but it also had a significant Shia population. In Pakistan, a deep divide had developed between Shias and Sunnis as a result of the power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan had consistently received generous economic assistance from Saudi Arabia. It recently announced economic assistance worth USD 4.2 billion. Pakistan had previously received a \$6 billion bailout package in 2018.<sup>179</sup> In addition, 2.6 million of Pakistan's workers, or a sizable chunk, reside in Saudi Arabia and send money home, which was crucial for

---

<sup>178</sup> Muhammad Ihsan Qadir and Muhammad Saifur Rehman, Saudi-Iranian Rivalry in the Middle East: Implications for Pakistan, *Pakistan Horizon*; Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 69, No. 4(October 2016), pp. 57-72

<sup>179</sup> Ibid

Pakistan's economy to thrive. According to estimates from the State Bank of Pakistan, Pakistani expatriates in Saudi Arabia contributed remittances of USD 821.6 million in the 2019–2020 fiscal year.<sup>180</sup> This highlights the immense economic importance of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan. Saudi Arabia was also very important from spiritual and religious point of view. Pakistan has a large Sunni majority that had a religious connection to Saudi Arabia. Muslims revere it as one of their holiest religious sites, Haramain Sharifain. Additionally, many people hold the belief that it was their religious duty to safeguard the sacred sites in Saudi Arabia. In this situation, Pakistan cannot afford to upset Saudi Arabia by limiting Saudi support for religious institutions there or by adopting any other such step. Pakistan leans toward Saudi Arabia because of its large Sunni population and economic imperatives.<sup>181</sup> Strong military ties exist between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan provides Saudi armed forces with a lot of assistance, supplies, and training. Since the 1970s, Pakistani soldiers have been stationed in Saudi Arabia to protect the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) leaders. One of Pakistan's wars with India's most important friends had been Saudi Arabia, particularly since Bangladesh was created in 1971 from Pakistan's eastern wing. During the Persian Gulf War in 1990–1991, Pakistan sent troops to Saudi Arabia to protect the Islamic holy sites.<sup>182</sup> The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan were the only countries to accept Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Regarding Pakistan's determination to conduct an atomic test in the vicinity of the Chagai Hills at Weapon-Testing Laboratories-III (WTL-III) in May 1998, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif only had the utmost faith in Saudi Arabia. When Khan authorized the atomic tests the only countries to back Pakistan and applaud it for making the "bold decision" were Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>183</sup> Additionally, in order to help Pakistan cope with potential economic penalties, Saudi Arabia promised to provide 50,000 barrels of free oil each day.

Pakistan and Iran share a border that is 909 kilometers long, making them close neighbors on the opposite end of the spectrum.<sup>184</sup> Despite this, Islamabad faces a significant challenge in advancing

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibid

<sup>181</sup> Khalid Z., Evolution of Saudi–Pakistan strategic relationship 1947–1990: Military security and economic factors. *Strategic Studies*, 13(1), 53–77. (1989).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid

<sup>183</sup> Bishku M. In search of identity and security: Pakistan and the Middle East, 1947–77. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 12(3), 34. 1992.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid

cooperation with Tehran in light of US sanctions against Iran and its fierce rivalry with Saudi Arabia. A tranquil border with Iran was essential for maintaining peace and stability in the turbulent province of Baluchistan in Pakistan. Intelligence and security cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad was required to get rid of the extremists who were hiding out in the remote border regions between the two nations. In Iran's ties, geoeconomics should take precedence over regional rivalry. Iran attempted to increase its support for Shiites in the region following the 1979 revolution.<sup>185</sup> These seminaries became breeding grounds for radicalization and militancy in Pakistan and were involved in the production and distribution of sectarian hate literature, thereby widening the gap between the Shia and Sunni populations. Hatred and violence between sects evolved into terrorism, posing a serious threat to Pakistan's national security. Almost all Pakistani provinces received reports of sectarian violence and terrorism, particularly between 2013 and 2018.<sup>186</sup> Sectarian militancy and violence persist in DI Khan, Kohat, Parachinar, Quetta, Jhang, and Faisalabad and many other cities of Pakistan.<sup>187</sup> Pakistan faced sectarian tensions fueled by the Saudi-Iran confrontation.

## **5.2 Challenges to Pakistan's Economic Interests**

Both Iran and Saudi Arabia were important for Pakistan's economic interests. Pakistan had a declining economy and was in desperate need of financial assistance. Saudi Arabia always helped Pakistan in financial crunches. Energy import was another significant factor in Pakistan's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia both. With an unbalanced trade balance, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan had a substantial economic tie. Saudi Arabia employs 2.5 million Pakistanis, who make large remittances back to their own country.<sup>188</sup> It imported approximately \$390 million worth of textiles, food items like rice, meat, and vegetables from Pakistan in 2016, according to US trade statistics. Leather and furniture receive an additional 26 percent. Saudi Arabia was a significant key accomplice for Pakistan which had consistently rescued Pakistan at whatever point it had confronted financial and political limitations previously. KSA was India's third- largest oil exporter and a vital strategic ally of the United States. With its Vision-2030, KSA was taking steps to liberalize its society, culture, and economy. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 seeks to make the country a leader in international investments. The development of Saudi Arabia's Aramco into a worldwide industrial behemoth, which inspires

---

<sup>185</sup> Ibid

<sup>186</sup> Siddiqi R. A. Pakistan's evolving relations with Saudi Arabia: Emerging dynamics and challenges. *Policy Perspectives*, 16(1), 61–76. (2019).

<sup>187</sup> Ibid

<sup>188</sup> Ibid



other large companies to pursue international expansion, is a crucial component of Pakistan's Vision 2030. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) also hopes to use its advantageous geographic position to serve as a crossroads for the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. By linking Pakistan as a critical geoeconomics bridge, Saudi Arabia will increase the economic reach of Aramco and other significant enterprises throughout South and Central Asia. Pakistan can benefit from KSA's international economic progress in order to attract investment for the CPEC and other development and energy infrastructure projects. Therefore, Pakistan benefits from Saudi Arabia becoming the CPEC's third economic partner. The convergence of these nations' interests can yield significant benefits.

On the other, Pakistan- Iran shares the border which can facilitate trade between the two countries. Unfortunately, the non-cordial relations and many suspicions had hindered both to benefit from bilateral trade opportunities. Particularly, in the context of energy needs, Pakistan had great potential to import oil and natural gas from Iran through pipeline networking. In 2017, Pakistan and Iran signed a Banking and Payment agreement with an intention to expand financial cooperation between both the states. Likewise, both the countries agreed to enhance their bilateral trade. In 2020, it was estimated that Iran's export to Pakistan reached \$US 352 million, the third highest in Iran's exports.

Considering Pakistan's potential financial challenges, Saudi Arabia was a crucial source of funding. For Pakistan to guarantee constant availability to natural gas and oil, there were also enormous logistical challenges. Pakistan imports oil and gas from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Iran in addition to tiny amounts from other nations to cover its energy demands. Remittances that Pakistani migrant workers send to their motherland (Pakistan) from the oil-rich Gulf States were another factor in the country's decision to refrain from making any substantial political steps in relation to both the countries.

### **5.3 Security Concerns**

Security was another crucial segment of any country's foreign policy. Saudi-Arabia and Pakistan are good strategic partners, but they didn't possess any serious security threats to each other. Saudi-Arabia- Iran complications had created security apprehensions for Pakistan vis-à-vis sectarian violence, religious militancy, Terrorism and Indian factors as the most crucial. Afghan factor was also a part of a security challenge to Pakistan. Taliban's influence both in Pakistan and Iran's borders had a serious implication on the relations on both the countries. On the other, the

Taliban were alleged to be raised by the Saudi support and US military and strategic assistance during the cold war that create another dividing line between Pakistan- Saudi Arabia and Iran. The regional terrorist groups were another security threat. Jundallah and Jaish-ul-Adl were the terrorist groups active in attacking and kidnapping and other terrorist acts in Iran and then fled to Pakistan's area bordered with Iran. Such, terrorist acts severely impacted on Pakistan-Iran relations.

The regional ethnic tribal groups also had a deep influence on Pakistan's security. The Baloch insurgents usually manipulate their border connection with Iran, taking refuge in Iran's border areas. Iran's government had warned the Pakistan's government to restrain from using Iranian soil for any kind of terrorist acts by the sectarian or ethnic factions.

#### **5.4 Regional Factors and China**

South Asia's regional geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics were changing due to the global power shift. China's rise to power was influencing the regional and global settings. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan were not beyond these developments. China's vision of connectivity had laid the foundation for many projects under BRI. Prince Mohammed bin Salman introduced the bold Vision 2030 as a road map in an effort to address this very volatile geopolitical environment.<sup>189</sup> This road map encompasses education reform, governance, housing, privatization, fiscal responsibility, and other important sectors. Pakistan once more found itself at the center of efforts. Washington was hostile in an effort to restrain and isolate the expanding Chinese influence. With its massive investment in the largest infrastructure system in the world China is estimated to be investing \$ 900 billion in the construction of the New Silk Road, the largest infrastructure development program in the world. Pakistan gains from this project as a result of being China's friend, as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor attracts \$65 billion in investments for the development of roads, bridges, geothermal energy, and the largest port with a view of the Arabian Sea in Gwadar.<sup>190</sup> Pakistan declares that it will remain impartial in the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. However, given the escalating hostility between Saudi Arabia and Iran, it has proven challenging to stick with this plan. Pakistan's decision-making appears to favor Saudi Arabia. Pakistan supports this discourse due to a confluence of geopolitical, geographic, and demographic circumstances and that Pakistan cannot be neutral due to

---

<sup>189</sup> Frederic M. Wehrey, Theodore W. Karasik, Alireza Nader, Jeremy Ghez, Lydia Hansell, and Robert A. Guffey. (2009). Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implication for U.S. Policy. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 2 Kamran Yousaf. 2021. "Paki)

<sup>190</sup> Ibid

its stronger defense, economic, and cultural links with Saudi Arabia. Islamabad's twin purpose in asserting neutrality in both domestic and international matters promote the interests of the country.<sup>191</sup> Due to its economic, sectarian, and geopolitical realities, Pakistan seeks to avoid becoming involved in the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, due to its close, complex links with Saudi Arabia, this is particularly challenging.<sup>192</sup> Pakistan's foreign policy still has Iran as a secondary concern over Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's foreign policy faces many challenges to balance its relations with two power rivals of the Middle East. Because of it, Pakistan's efforts to counter terrorism have been taken as suspicious. Pakistan for its own secure foreign policy concerns, though tried to contribute significantly to the growth of regionalism in the Middle East, but the historical rivalries between Iran and Saudi Arabia remain persistent. During Mohammad bin Salman's visit to Pakistan in 2019, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's crown prince signed several significant agreements worth \$20 billion.<sup>193</sup> Second, Pakistan maintains its neutral position on Yemen because Riyadh is cognizant of the geopolitical sensitivity. Saudi Arabia supported the Yemeni Houthis and attributed the attack on the two oil fields of Abqaiq and Khurais to Iran in September 2019. Pakistan protested the incident, and Imran Khan, the country's prime minister, visited Saudi Arabia and Iran to mediate the issue. Any skepticism regarding the chances of success was erased by Pakistan's decision to intervene between Riyadh and Tehran. All of the other Muslim nations greatly appreciated Pakistan's sincere efforts: Pakistan tried to act as a mediator during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), but it did not do so for the first time.<sup>194</sup> Also, Pakistan's efforts in 1997 made it possible to set up a meeting between King Abdullah and Hashmi Rafsanjani, the president of Iran at the time, to break the ice. Pakistan was more susceptible to sectarian conflicts as a result of its history of sectarian violence because of any conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran.<sup>195</sup> Saudi Arabia had been bombed by an alliance of eight countries in an effort to counter Iranian dominance in the area. Imran Khan, the then prime minister of Pakistan, urged both nations to use negotiation to reduce the tension rather than condemning Iran all at once in the larger interest of regional peace and stability. Pakistan must exercise caution to

---

<sup>191</sup> Cafiero, Giorgio; Wagner, Daniel (23 November 2015). "Saudi Arabia and Pakistan's Evolving Alliance". Huffington Post. Retrieved 27 January 2016.)

<sup>192</sup> Ibid

<sup>193</sup> Ibid

<sup>194</sup> Bishku M. In search of identity and security: Pakistan and the Middle East, 1947–77. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 12(3), 34. (1992).

<sup>195</sup> Dr Ahmad Ghouri, Pakistan's role in Yemen crisis; *The Express Tribune*, October 28, 2018.

prevent any political unrest in the region. In recent decades, a result of all these conflicting interests and domestic and international constraints, Pakistan's foreign policy toward the Middle East had become extremely cautious and balanced, and its stance on the ongoing disputes between Arab nations has become an unavoidable necessity rather than an option. Along the delicate boundary imposed by geography on the one hand, and economic and religious pressures on the other, Pakistan continues to move with the utmost prudence.<sup>196</sup> Supportive roles can also be played by regional organizations like OPEC, the GCC, and ECO.<sup>197</sup>

---

<sup>196</sup> Riaz Khokhar, *Pakistan Diplomatic Challenges in the Middle East*; Research Officer at the Center for International Strategic Studies, Islamabad. October 18, 2018.

<sup>197</sup> Marvin G. Weinbaum; *Pakistan Tricky Balancing Act Between Saudi Arabia and Iran*, Middle East Institute, September 23, 2019.

## Conclusion

The history of Saudi-Arabia and Iran feud relations reveals that both the countries had their contrasting interests in the region that kept them apart to get closer. Saudi Arab and Iran both had been ambitious to dominate Middle East and to lead Muslim world. However, both remain contentious and involved into regional conflicts and civil war, pushing the Middle Eastern region into turmoil and unrest. To protect its national interests, Pakistan previously played a neutral position in the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Saudi Arabia provides Pakistan with economic assistance, and Pakistan also receives sizable remittances from Pakistanis living and working abroad in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the military ties helped to build close ties between Riyadh and Islamabad. Additionally, Saudi Arabia and Iran are both significant regional players with a favorable stance for Pakistan in supporting Kashmir. Pakistan has been attempting to mediate a resolution between Saudi Arabia and Iran regarding their political and ideological differences. Due to its strategic location, Iran is one of Pakistan's most important allies. The bilateral rival relations between both Iran and Saudi Arabia have created serious implications for Pakistan to adopt a neutral stance towards both of them. Iran was a regional neighbor and Saudi Arabia was a strategic and economic partner. The complex triangulation was a complicated scenario for Pakistan vis-à-vis its regional policy is concerned.

The India factor also forces Pakistan to maintain friendly ties with both Middle Eastern states. Pakistan would not benefit from either state's dependency on India. Despite Pakistan's historical neutrality over hostilities between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Islamabad had been actively attempting to defuse tense relations since 2016. Other Muslim nations and the West have expressed appreciation for Pakistan's role as a mediator on various occasions. Pakistan's sectarian division had problems on the home front that affect its foreign policy. Therefore, Pakistan's foreign policy had changed to take on a mediating position in the confrontation between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran due to the knowledge of internal repercussions. Given its crucial role as a Middle Eastern nation's security supplier, Pakistan should keep pursuing such policies in the future. Pakistan was expected to play a future role in reducing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran while maintaining its regional advantage.

## Findings

This research dissertation has certain conclusions/findings based on the thorough analysis on the subject:

- The Saudi-Iran rivalry was not merely a bilateral conflict between the two Middle Eastern states, rather it has deep ideological and political contradictions that keep the two regional powers apart.
- The ambition to become regional hegemon have led two states implementing their foreign policies in their quest for regional power and influence through playing a power politics exploiting the other regional countries and promoting an environment of civil and proxy wars in Middle East.
- Historically, Saudi Arabia and Iran had been using their ideological grounds in the middle east to exert their respective influence.
- Pakistan, being a regional neighbor of Iran and a strategic ally with Saudi Arabia caught in a delicate complexity to balance its foreign relations with both the countries.
- Pakistan's relations with Iran have more sensitivity due to Indian influence and ambitions to forge economic ties with Iran.
- Pakistan also had apprehensions on Indian involvement in facilitating terrorism related activities in Baluchistan through Iran.
- The Chahbahar port in parallel to IPI and delay in the construction of pipeline is an energy and economic setback for Pakistan.
- Tehran has inclination to be a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). By joining CPEC, it would enhance participation and collaboration on matters of defense, security, energy, and economy that will be helpful to mediate on contentious issues.
- Pakistan neither can afford hostility with Iran nor can annoy Saudi Arabia for its larger economic, political and security interest vis-à-vis both the countries.
- Saudi Vision 2030 for Pakistan is the Saudi government's vow to grant green cards to foreigners within five years in order to increase their rights to live and work in Saudi Arabia. This demonstrates that the Kingdom seeks to reduce its reliance on unskilled labour, which presents Pakistan's government with numerous opportunities and challenges.
- Given the deepening commercial, cultural, and geopolitical relations with Saudi Arabia and the frequent US sanctions on Iran, Pakistan's economic and security ties with Iran are likely

to confront considerable difficulties.

## **Recommendations:**

- Pakistan should endeavor to strengthen its ties with Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- For the greater good of all states and regional peace, Saudi-Arabia and Iran should put aside minor differences and work together.
- Bilateral and Multilateral trade should be promoted between both Saudi-Arabia and Iran and the other regional actors, particularly in the energy sector to reduce the intensity of hostility.
- Pakistan must play a positive role of mediator to normalize between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- Pakistan in collaboration with Iran must revive and complete the IP gas pipeline. It can supply 750 million cubic feet per day (MMCFD), which could significantly help close the country's energy gap.
- The vast majority of Pakistani workers in the Middle East are unskilled, with only a small number of professionals and skilled workers. Pakistan should improve the skills of its exportable workforce. The government must enhance its knowledge economy investments and create more professionals and trained human resources in order to compete in the global job market. By increasing remittances, this will not only lower Pakistan's unemployment rate but also increase the country's national budget.
- In addition, both countries must work together to defend against the harmful intentions of non-state actors along the dangerous border between Iran and Pakistan.
- India cooperates with Middle Eastern countries in order to safeguard its energy routes. The Duqm port in Oman is also leased by India.<sup>198</sup> The port is conveniently close to both the Chabahar and Gwadar ports. Given China's rival ports and naval bases in the Indian Ocean, Duqm port's geopolitical ramifications cannot be disregarded. Therefore, Pakistan must strengthen its maritime diplomacy with Gulf nations in this setting. In the Gulf of Aden, the Pakistan Navy commands the multinational naval force known as Combined Task Force-151. As a result, Pakistan is in a strong position to oversee maritime security matters.<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>198</sup> Bishnoi A., & Sahoo P. Belt and road initiative: Developments, economic and strategic implications, Institute of Economic Growth India. 2020

<sup>199</sup> Chaudhury D. R. China bails out Pakistan to Repay \$ 2 billion Saudi-debt: Pak media. The Economic Time; December 13, 2020

- In addition to addressing other concerns regarding border security, Iran and Pakistan must confront internal security issues in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan. Common issues of grave concern include sectarian divisions and cross-border terrorism.
- The two countries must step up their efforts to expand their combined investments in the CPEC and Chabahar projects. Therefore, to adequately solve the economic and security difficulties.
- Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia should work together to fortify the OIC and take the lead in uniting other Muslim nations.
- Pakistan must find a balance between its connections with Saudi Arabia and Iran. These obstacles can only be overcome by the leadership's diplomatic savvy and practicality.



## **SAUDI-IRAN RIVALRY: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN FOREIGN POLICY (2015-2021)**

### **Post-Script Scenario:**

The recent geopolitical shift in global order has introduced many new dimensions of emerging regional and global politics. Saudi Arabia-Iran relations also went through a major transformation through restoring their bilateral diplomatic relations on 10 March, 2023 mediated by China through a 'Joint Trilateral Agreement'. Previously, the same efforts were made by Iraq and Oman to initiate peace between Saudi Arabia and Iran, but China's being the emerging world leader remain successful to play its effective role. China's vision to broker peace between Saudi-Iran rapprochement is driven by the need of a collective interdependent development at regional and global level.

### **Efficacy of Saudi Iran Rapprochement: Challenges and Prospects**

There are multiple opinions about the Saudi-Iran restoration of diplomatic relations.

- The Saudi-Iran rivalry has long historical roots that may not be eliminated so easily, as it is a time taking process through building trust and engagement and collaboration of both the countries at multiple levels.
- The Iranian-Saudi rapprochement can have prospects for regional stability particularly on the critical issues like yamen, Syria and the Gulf Arab states. But it will require sufficient time to restore normal bilateral relations.
- Iranian nuclear program is another serious obstacle in durable normalization of Saudi-Iran relations. As, Saudi Arabia is closer to USA and American and Israeli apprehension on Iranian nuclear program will impact Saudi Arabia's relations with Iran.
- The US efforts to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia are also critical aspect to effect Saudi-Iran further durable relations.
- This peaceful development between Iran and Saudi Arabia has the opportunity to foster support at multilateral platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). For all the countries can benefit from this platform. As the increased collaboration between Iran and Saudi Arabia within the SCO could create an opportunity for Pakistan and India to engage in constructive dialogue.
- For Pakistan, there are prospects with Saudi-Iran normalization. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia remain very important from political, strategic and economic concerns. Therefore, the normal relations between the two will enhance the prospects of economic cooperation for Pakistan.

- China played a significant role in Saudi-Iran rapprochement vowing to its economic interest and connectivity projects like BRI. Pakistan being a stakeholder of CPEC, has the opportunity Pakistan can use this opportunity of foreign investments and development from both countries.
- The current Saudi-Iran normalization have many avenues of investment in energy sector as both Pakistan and Iran have untapped natural gas and energy resources that could help develop Pakistan's gas and electricity transmission systems.
- Likewise, Pakistan can fulfill its energy needs from Saudi-Arabia through exporting oil on affordable rates to restore its industrial production.
- The healthy interdependence with Iran has the potential to help Pakistan to deal with geopolitical challenges of inter-regional connectivity, such as Afghanistan and cross border terrorism in Baluchistan that will improve the complex regional security structure.
- India always remain a critical factor in Pakistan's regional political and security architecture. The normalization will enhance the possibilities of economic interdependence and collaboration that will help India and Pakistan also to easing tensions and promoting commercial ties.

## Bibliography

Azeem. Gul, Rizwana, K. A, “*Iran and Saudi Arabia’s Strategic Rivalry and the Middle Eastern Security: An Assessment.*” Liberal Art social sciences International Journals (LASSI), vol 5, 2021.

Adnan Amir, “*Pakistanis pay price as Islamabad joins Turkey-Iran-Malaysia bloc,*” Nikkei Asia, December 4, 2020. Accessed on 14 April 2022.

Al-Rasheed, M. “*A History of Saudi Arabia*” (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University (2010).  
Adler, E. *Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics. European Journal of International Relations*, 3,319-363. (1997).

Al-Zahed, S. (2011). *Hatred of Arabs Deeply Rooted in Persians, says Iranian intellectual, Al Arabiya News*, 9 October 2011.

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities London: Verso*. Ansari, A. *Iranian Nationalism Rediscovered, Middle East Institute*. 2009.

Alexander Wendt, 1999 *Social theory and politics and International Relations and International Organisation, Sociology*, Cambridge university press, September 2012.

Alainna Lilola, *Class Politics are at the Center of Bahrain’s Political Conflict Politics & Society*, August 18,2021

Antonino Occhiuto; *Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), Euro Gulf Information Center*, 15 January 2018.

Anadolu Agency “*Saudi, Pakistani leaders reaffirm support for Palestinians,*” Middle East; May 9, 2021

Alam, S. *Iran-Pakistan relations: Political and strategic dimensions*. Strategic Analysis, 2004 28(4), 526-545.

A.Guffey. (2009). *Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implication for U.S. Policy*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 2 Kamran Yousaf. 2021. “Paki)

Baldwin, D. A. 2012. *Power and International Relations, in Handbook of International Relations*.

25 January 2016.

Bar-Tal, D., *Mabon Simon, Saudi Arabia and Iran: Soft Power Rivalry in the Middle East*, 2013.

Bello, H. J., *Islamic Identity, Oil and Global insecurity: Affirming Social Constructivism in the 21st Century*, *global politics*, 6(1), 91-98. (2017).

Buzan Barry; weaver, Ole. *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Society*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge. pp. 6–20, 41–47, 77–82. 2003.

Banish Khan, Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, *Religion, Spirituality and Foreign Policy Dynamics: A Case Study of Relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia*, *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* Volume No. 57, Issue No. 1 (January – June, 2020).

Bishku M. In search of identity and security: *Pakistan and the Middle East, 1947–77*. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 12(3), 34. (1992).

Bishnoi A., & Sahoo P. *Belt and road initiative: Developments, economic and strategic implications*, Institute of Economic Growth India. 2020.

Chaudhury D. R. *China bails out Pakistan to Repay \$ 2 billion Saudi-debt: Pak media*. *The Economic Time*; December 13, 2020.

Crossette B. *Pakistanis agree to join defense of Saudi Arabia*. *New York Times*. August 14, 1990. Country-Wise Remittances. State Bank of Pakistan, King Abdullah ends Asian tour with state visit to Pakistan". Archived from the original on June 18, 2008)

Cafiero, Giorgio; Wagner, Daniel (23 November 2015). "Saudi Arabia and Pakistan's Evolving Alliance". *Huffington Post*. Retrieved 27 January 2016.)

Checkel, J., *International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework*. *International Organization*, 59(4), 801- 826. (2015).

Clarck, T.R. *Arab Nationalism, A History: Nations and State in the Arab World Hobo-ken, NJ: Wiley*. (2012).

Champion, D. (2002). *The Paradoxical Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Momentum of Reform*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chejne, A. G. (1969). *The Arabic Language: Its Role in History* (p. 98). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

De Cordier B. Pakistan and the GCC countries: Complementarity, or a center-periphery tale? (Central Asia Economic Paper No. 11). *Central Asia Economic Paper*. 2013. Debalina Ghoshal, "Pakistan Keen to Keep Ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia," YaleGlobal, October 01, 2015.

Dr Ahmad Ghouri, Pakistan's role in Yemen crisis; *The Express Tribune*, October 28, 2018. Frederic M. Wehrey, Theodore W. Karasik, Alireza Nader, Jeremy Ghez, Lydia Hansell, and Robert

Freeman, Colin; Khan, Taimur, "Pakistan in talks with Saudi Arabia to send combat troops to protect the kingdom". *The National*. Although the kingdom, like other Persian Gulf countries, does not make the numbers public, experts say there are as many as 70,000 Pakistanis serving across the Saudi military services at any one time. March 13, 2017.

Ghoshal, Debalina. "Pakistan Keen to Keep Ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia." YaleGlobal, 2015.

Genin, Aaron. "A GLOBAL, SAUDI SOFT POWER OFFENSIVE: A SAUDI PRINCESS AND DOLLAR DIPLOMACY". The California Review. Retrieved 2019-04-04.

GERALD M. FEIERSTEIN, YEMEN: THE 60-YEAR WAR, *Middle East Institute*, FEBRUARY 2019-2

Gary Sick, 2004, Wehrey, Frederic; Karasik, Theodore W; Nader, Alireza; Ghez, Jeremy J; Hansell, Lydia; Guffey, Robert A. (2009).

Gheciu, Alexandra; "Constructivism". (*The Oxford Handbook of International Security*). Wohlforth William C (eds.) (Onuf 1989), Barnett, Michael L. (2018).

Hassan, Y. A. (2017). *PAKISTAN'S MIDDLE EAST GAMBLE*. South Asian Voices-Regional Affairs, 1-2.

Humayun, F. (2015). *Pakistan's Middle East Problem*. *The South Asia Channel*, 1-2. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/19/pakistans-middle-east-problem>

H. James Burgwyn, ‘‘Mussolini Warlord: Failed Dreams of Empire, 1940-1943, ‘‘ (Enigma Books, 2012) New York.

Hunter, Shireen. *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order*. Since then, Pakistan’s sectarian tensions have been a major irritant in Iranian-Pakistan relations, 2010.

Joint Statement for the visit of the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan*, May 8, 2021.

Khokar, R. (2018). *Pakistan’s Diplomatic Challenges in the Middle East*. *Centre for International Strategic Studies*, 1-2. Retrieved from <https://ciss.org.pk/pakistans-diplomatic-challenges-in-the-middle-east/>

Khan, R. (2019). *Security Dynamics in Saudi-Iran Relations: An Analysis (1997-2013)*. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 3(II), 242–255

Khalid Z., *Evolution of Saudi–Pakistan strategic relationship 1947–1990: Military security and economic factors*. *Strategic Studies*, 13(1), 53–77. (1989).

Kaplan, Robert. “*The Geography of the Iranian Power*.” in *The Revenge of Geography*. New York: Random House, 2012.

Kaura, Vinay. “*India and Iran: Challenges and Opportunity*.” *The Diplomat.*, 2015

Khan, Raja Muhammad. “*Towards Harmonization of Pak-Iran Relations*.” *Margallah Papers*, 88– 111. (2010).

Kalin, M., & Siddiqui, N. (2014). *Religious Authority and the Promotion of Sectarian Tolerance in Pakistan (Vol. 21)*: US Institute of Peace.

Laurie Calhoun., *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies* 21 (1):87-91) 2011.

M. I. Qadir and S.R. Muhammad, *Saudi-Iranian Rivalry in the Middle East: Implications for Pakistan*, *Pakistan*, Horizon 69, no 4 (2016) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44988275>.

March, J. G. *Measurement concepts in the theory of influence*. *J. Politics*. (In press).

Marvin G. Weinbaum; *Pakistan Tricky Balancing Act Between Saudi Arabia and Iran*, Middle East Institute, September 23, 2019.

Max Fisher. "Iran is popular in Pakistan, overwhelmingly disliked everywhere else". The Washington Post. Retrieved 19 March 2013).

Mansoor Moaddel and Stuart A. Karabenick, *Religious Fundamentalism among Young Muslims in Egypt and Saudi Arabia*, Oxford University Press, Vol. 86, No. 4 (Jun., 2008), pp. 1675-1705

Muhammad Ihsan Qadir and Muhammad Saifur Rehman, *Saudi-Iranian Rivalry in the Middle East: Implications for Pakistan*, Pakistan Horizon; *Pakistan Institute of International Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (October 2016), pp. 57-72

Mohammazadeh, B., Beyond royal politics: *state transformation and foreign policy in Saudi Arabia*. Third World Quarterly, 40(8), 1571-1589. (2019).

Morgenthau, 1956: 4 *Understanding International Relations*. London: Palgrave. Brown, C. with Ainley, K. (2005)

Moonis, A. (2008). Sectarian conflicts in Pakistan. *Pakistan Vision*, 9(1), 17

Mazhar, M. S., & Goraya, N. S. (2013). *Challenges in Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline*. NDU Journal, 27, 163-178.

“National economy stabilising after passing through difficult times, claims Imran” Daily Times, May 10, 2021. Naveed Ahmad, *Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Relations.*” *Saudi Arabia: Embassy of Pakistan. The Middle East; Pakistan Horizon*, pp 52-67, 1982.

NRC Handelsblad (2012). *Protesten en arrestaties in Bahrein in aanloop naar Grand Prix* June 14, 2012.

“OIC chief, *Pakistan PM discuss Islamophobia in non-OIC countries,*” Arab News, May 10, 2021.

Officials. *"Pak-Iran Relations Since Islamic Revolution: Genesis [sic] of Cooperation and Competition"*. Embassy of Iran, Islamabad. Archived from the original on 10 April 2013. Retrieved 25 November 2012

OREN BARAK, *Dilemmas of Security in Iraq, Security Dialogue*; Department of political Science and Department of International Relations, December 2007; pp. 455-475

Pakistan dispatches humanitarian assistance to flood hit Iran". *Mehr News Agency*. 10 April 2019. Archived from the original on 11 April 2019. Retrieved 7 July 2019).

Pak-Iran Relations Since Islamic Revolution: *Genesis [sic] of Cooperation and Competition*". Embassy of Iran, Islamabad. Archived from the original on 10 April 2013. Retrieved 25 November 2012.

Pakistan's Balancing Act between Iran and Saudi Arabia, *Asia Times*, February 12, 2016.

"PM meets OIC, MWL chiefs, urges unity to tackle Islamophobia," *Express Tribune*, May 9, 2021.  
"Pakistan expects UAE remittances to be slashed as pandemic hits migrant workers," *CNBC*, July 10, 2020.

Paul Johnson. *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties* (Revised Edition). (Harper Perennial, 1991) CNN. (2006). "*Iran President Backs United Iraq*" 12.09.2016 <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/09/12/iraq.iran/> Access date: 01.04.2019.

Project on Middle East Democracy. "*State Department Reports on Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI.*" June 23, 2016; and POMED. "*One Year Later: Assessing Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI Report.*" November 2012.

Pak-Iran Trade Relations, report prepared by Sialkot Chamber of Commerce, 2020-2022

Riaz Khokhar, *Pakistan Diplomatic Challenges in the Middle East*; Research Officer at the Center for International Strategic Studies, Islamabad. October 18, 2018.

Reuters Staff, *the 2011 uprising in Bahrain and what's happened since*, February, 2011

Robert S. Ford, THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR A NEW STAGE, BUT IS IT THE FINAL ONE? *Middle East Institute*, 2019-8

Ramady, M. A., *The Saudi Arabian Economy: Policies, Achievements, and Challenges*. *International Economics*, 32-41, (2010).



Siddiqi R. A. Pakistan's evolving relations with Saudi Arabia: *Emerging dynamics and challenges*. Policy Perspectives, 16(1), 61–76. (2019). Officials. "Pak-Iran Relations Since Islamic Revolution: Genesis [sic] of Cooperation and Competition". Embassy of Iran, Islamabad. Archived from the original on 10 April 2013. Retrieved 25 November 2012

Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, *Cooperation and Implication for US Policy*. RAND Corporation, 14 November 2015.

Scott Cooper, Roham Alvandi, *The Fall of Heaven*, Middle East Journal: page 3, 2011.

Sayyed Mohammad Mousavi, *The Bahrain Crisis and the Religious and Geopolitical Conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia*, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Payame Noor University, Tehran, IRAN. October 2021

Syrian crisis: *Pakistan against any attempt to topple Bashar al-Assad*". 24 December 2015.

Saman Zulfqar, "India-Afghanistan Strategic Relations: Implications for Pakistan," IPRI Insight, Vol. 1, no.1 (2013): 14-22.

Safdar Sial, *An Analysis of Emerging Pakistani-Iranian Ties*, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, April 2015

Shah Alam, "Iran Pakistan Relations: Political and Strategic Dimensions," Strategic Analysis 28, no. 4 (2004): 5 Siddiqi R. A. *Pakistan's evolving relations with Saudi Arabia: Emerging dynamics and challenges*. Policy Perspectives, 16(1), 61–76. (2019).

Security Council, U. N. *Security Council Imposes Sanctions on Iran for Failure to Halt Uranium Enrichment*, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1737 (2006).

Saudi Gazette "Grand welcome for Saudi Crown Prince in Pakistan". 2019-02-17. Retrieved 2019-02-21.

Trt Word, "Is Pakistan shifting from its neutral stance in the Yemen conflict?" trtworld.com, 11 MAR 2019. Accessed On 14 April, 2022.

Thomas, Ward, "Norms and Security: *The Case of International Assassination*". International

Security. (2000) **25** (1): 105–133). (Ennaji, 2005: pp. 19-23)

TAREMI, Kamran. “*Iranian Foreign Policy Towards Occupied Iraq, 2003-2005*”, *Middle East Policy*, Volume 12 (4), 28-33. (2005).

Thomas O J, George M B. *The Interplay of Regionalism and Statism in Conflict Transformation of the Great Lakes of Africa: A Critical Look at Kenya*. Trends Tech Sci Res. 2020; 4(2)

Tali R. Grumet: *NEW MIDDLE EAST COLD WAR: SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN’S RIVALRY*, Dr. Joseph Szyliowicz, August 2015

Tertrais, Bruno (July 2012). “*Pakistan's Nuclear and WMD Programmes: Status, Evolution and Risks*” (PDF). *Non-Proliferation Papers. EU Non-Proliferation Consortium* (19): 16. Archived from the original (PDF) on 1 August 2012. Retrieved 19 April 2013.

Today, P. Pak, Iran, *Turkey establishing road, rail networks to boost trans-regional trade*. 2017.

WENDT, Alexander, “Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics”, *International Organization*, 46 (2), 391-425. (1992).

Weinbaum M., & Khurram A. *Pakistan and Saudi Arabia: Deference, dependence, and deterrence*. *The Middle East Journal*, 68(2), 211–228. (2014).

Yusuf, H. (2017). *Pakistan in the Middle East: A Cautious Balance*. *The Diplomat*, 1-2. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/pakistan-in-the-middle-east-a-cautious-balance>

Vinay Kaura, “*India and Iran: Challenges and Opportunity*,” *The Diplomat*, September 11, 2015.

Zamarayeva, N. “*Pakistan-Saudi Arabia: a strategic partnership*,” *New Eastern Outlook*, March 30th. (2014).

Zehra, Nasim (August 2000). “*Revitalizing Pakistan-Syria Policy*”. *Pakistan Defence Journal* Retrieved 28 August 2013.











