

Internal and External Pressures on Pakistan Foreign Policy with Special Reference to Iran-Saudi Relations

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Abstract

The relationship among Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan is reciprocal, dynamic, and ever-changing. The rivalry between Pakistan's neighbors is a serious issue for social cohesion, economic stability, and foreign policy. The diplomatic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran is the main focus of this essay, which covers internal and external pressures on Pakistan's foreign policy and has always been important in regional and international foreign policy affairs due to its history, geography, and topography. Economic considerations, security concerns of the region, and domestic political stability are the main factors impacting Pakistan's policy choices. Pakistan, as a player in the Saudi-Iranian tussle, has to carefully manage its ties with both countries and the other regional players. Given that Saudi Arabia and Iran have had ongoing disputes usually settled in other geopolitical areas, it is not easy to attain balance. Policymakers and experts would be able to comprehend South Asian and Middle Eastern issues better through this study. It would, therefore, also be an essential step in fostering regional stability.

Keywords: Neighbors, Foreign Policy, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan

Introduction

The geopolitics of Pakistan's Foreign policy is deeply affected by its regional location when it plays a crucial role in shaping its foreign policy actions along with other regional elements. It possesses Afghanistan as the northern border neighbor, while India, China, Iran, and the Indian Ocean are to the south. The main pillars of the nation's foreign policy are sovereignty, equality, and the amiability of interests. It is in an exchange with the pre-existing communication established between global states and at all levels of government, including governance. Pakistani foreign policy is based on mutual benefits through non-

interference in other state affairs, which are the major features of Pakistani foreign policy. Not only diplomatic but also economic relations, including trade, investment, technical, and humanitarian aid, are included in the scope. On the other hand, Pakistan's foreign policy is open to problems and difficulties, especially in the context of the Iran-Saudi Arabia axis of collision. This article addresses two of the most important factors that influenced Pakistan's export policy, particularly the relationships between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The most important aspect of the foreign policy of Pakistan is the relations with the other Muslim states. As a Muslim nation, Pakistan has been looking for friendships with other Muslim countries throughout its history. It is the main driver for the establishment of a peacefully and collaboratively-minded Community among Muslim states and the Muslims all across the globe. Pakistan, as one of the key Muslim states in the region, maintains a cordial relationship with Iran and Saudi Arabia, two prominent Muslim countries.

Pakistan has maintained relations with different countries based on sovereignty, equality, mutuality of interests and considerations, which benefits and rewards both sides. Pakistan has relations with all major powers like USA, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and UK. Foreign policy of Pakistan aims to protect its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, which is the basic concern of foreign policy. Pakistan's stance toward other states is to always conduct domestic affairs and interactions based on security and national interest.

An important feature of Pakistan's foreign policy is its focus on economic issues, trade, and investment. These issues are important for the country's future in economic terms. Pakistan cooperates with other countries and international financial institutions and organizations to seek economic assistance for its development projects and obtain loans to fulfill its needs. Pakistan extends technical and humanitarian assistance to other countries in earthquakes, floods, and other disasters. Similarly, when Pakistan is confronted with these types of issues, it also seeks assistance from outside.

Pakistan and Iran are connected by a common border, and they are having safe and deep historic, cultural, and religious relations with each other. Iran became the first state to recognize Pakistan as an independent and sovereign state after it gained its independence in 1947. Both countries are trade partners and have harmonized peace treaties. They have

supported each other in times of conflict, and Iran has always supported Pakistan's stance on the issue of Kashmir. However, the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia has created challenges for Pakistan's foreign policy and economy. Pakistan's position in this conflict has been neutral, but it has had an internal effect on socio-political relations and security at the domestic level. The Iranian nuclear program and the sanctions on Iran have also been factors that are responsible for harming Pakistan's trade and economy. Iran-US reconciliation is another complexity that was added later to the puzzle. However, Iran and Pakistan's mutual interests remain intertwined as two neighboring countries. Their relationship is based upon their Islamic identity, which has been reinforced due to the Islamic revolution in Iran. The two countries have increasing political, diplomatic, and economic ties.

From 1947 till today, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have maintained close relations. The bilateral relations are marked by diplomatic, military, political, and socio-economic contacts. Saudi Arabia is responsible for two important holy cities, Makkah and Madina, and millions of pilgrims from Pakistan visit the country every year. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always responded positively to Pakistan by offering financial help, especially during war times and crises. At the same time, the intra-regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia has been creating internal and external pressures on Pakistan's foreign policy. Saudi support for Sunnis in Pakistan and Iran supporting Shi's has proceeded to divide Pakistani society and cause intolerant patterns. Both nations are vehemently doling out sizeable amounts of money into the establishment of their own exclusive seminaries and sectarian institutions, augmenting the extremism and sectarianism in Pakistan..

Foreign policy of Pakistan has come under fire from both the outside and the inside, particularly in light of its connections to Iran and Saudi Arabia. Even in the face of the difficulties, Pakistan reaffirms its dedication to uphold its own independence, sovereignty taking into account the territorial integrity as well. Foreign policy of Pakistan is built on the basis of sovereignty, equality, and mutuality of interests, and consul with different states at different levels; maintaining relations with states of all political systems. Another key area of Pakistan's foreign policy is the economy. It includes trade and investment, technical and material assistance, and humanitarian aid for countries that need it at any moment.

The relationship between Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia is characterized by complexity and multi-dimensionality. The competition is pivotal to Pakistan's foreign affairs and economy, contributing to division and hostility in Pakistani society. Although Iran would prefer to see an Islamic republic rather than a democratic country built on Western values in Pakistan, the two states have mutual interests as well. Their relationship is still based on their Islam. Moreover, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have traditionally shared a solid relationship, and the latter has evaded the former from many difficulties. Pakistan's foreign policy is centered on the ideals of neutrality and non-aggression, and it forms and strengthens its relationships with different states according to their mutual interests and the principles of understanding and respect.

Research Questions:

1. What are the internal factors influencing Pakistan's foreign policy decisions, particularly in its handling of Iran-Saudi relations?
2. How do external pressures, including regional dynamics and international alliances, impact Pakistan's foreign policy stance in the context of Iran-Saudi relations?

Research Objectives:

1. To analyze the historical, cultural, and religious factors shaping Pakistan's approach towards Iran and Saudi Arabia.
2. To examine the role of geopolitical considerations and strategic interests in Pakistan's foreign policy decisions regarding Iran-Saudi relations.

Literature review

Since the independence of Pakistan, the country's foreign policy has been facing numerous challenges that are creating serious internal and external threats to its security, sovereignty, and ideological interest. As pointed out by Jamshaid et al. (2014), every incident, event, and decision in one part of the world has a direct or indirect impact on other countries globally.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have a long history of strong political, strategic, and religious ties dating back to 1947. According to Mustafa (2007), Saudi Arabia supports Pakistan financially, politically, and ethically during times of need and is also a significant supporter of Pakistan's stance on Kashmir. Pakistan also has good relations with other Middle Eastern countries and plays a significant role in the strategic diplomatic and internal policies of Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia. Additionally, Saudi Arabia serves as the custodian of the two holy cities of Makkah and Madina, and millions of Muslims visit Saudi Arabia each year to perform Hajj and Umrah.

However, Saudi Arabia's efforts to counter Iranian influence in the region are seriously affecting its political, ideological, and religious foothold in Pakistan. Between Saudi Arabia and Iran, two Muslim brothers, Pakistan has consistently acted as a mediator and has maintained a balance in their relationship. (Syed, 2014).

Iran is situated to the west of Pakistan, and both countries share a common border of 805 kilometers. Iran and Pakistan share a strong historic, cultural, and religious relationship with each other. Iran was the first nation to acknowledge Pakistan's declaration of independence on August 14, 1947. Pakistan became an independent sovereign state. (Din, 2013).

The Saud dynasty's ascent to power in 1928 marked the official beginning of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and in 1929 both nations signed a treaty of friendship. Between 1929 and 1979, sectarian differences were not given much importance and were not a major topic of discussion in bilateral talks. Before the Iranian revolution, the main political dispute in the Gulf did not revolve around Sunni-Shiite or Arab-Persian differences but rather between conservative and radical factions (Al Saud&Abdulaziz, 2015).

Regional and international events significantly impacted the foreign policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran between 1929 and 1960. The establishment of Israel and the Arab-Israel war after World War II, as well as the impacts of the Cold War era and defense treaties of both countries, led to opposite policies being adopted by Saudi Arabia and Iran. Despite these differences, the relations between the two countries remained cold. In 1960, Iran gained economic and military power in the Middle East region and became a member of

Western defense alliances. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia gained special status among the Muslim world under the leadership of King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz. Both kings agreed to sign a demarcation agreement in 1968, and Saudi Arabia played a vital role in solving regional and international disputes. However, after the assassination of King Faisal and the Islamic revolution in Iran, relations between the two countries deteriorated. Iran changed its approach towards regional political and religious issues, and tensions grew due to Iran's oppressive policy towards the USA. Saudi Arabia's decision to support Saddam Hussein, expansion policy towards Iran, and the Hajj incident of 1987 further strained relations.

The end of the Iran-Iraq war presented an opportunity to restore diplomatic relations between the two countries. However, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait highlighted the need for good relations between Iran and Iraq for the stability of the region. Iran's attempt to export Islamic revolution and Shia ideology and its support for Shia insurgent groups in Yemen led to a tense relationship with Saudi Arabia. The Middle East witnessed changes as a result of the Arab Spring, and Iran gained more influence. In 2013, Hassan Rouhani became the President of Iran, and his moderate leadership led Iran towards rapprochement with western countries. After a series of dialogues and meetings, Iran signed an agreement with six powers to suspend international sanctions on its nuclear program. The world appreciated the Iran-US rapprochement, but Saudi Arabia expressed deep concern regarding Iran's nuclear program, which it deemed a challenge to its security and integrity (Rizwan et al., 2014).

The killing of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimir, a Shia leader in Saudi Arabia, led to the deterioration of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Many Iranians valued the life of the sentenced prisoner and expressed their discontent with the execution sentence passed against him. Consequently, the Iranian government threatened an appropriate response, which led to mutual diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia (Qadir&Rehman, 2016).

Pakistan's foreign policy has been under pressure both internally and from the external environment due to its historical neighboring relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia. While Pakistan usually keeps a balance in its relations with both countries, it is becoming difficult to do that due to the changing situation in the Middle East, which is having negative impacts on Pakistan's foreign policy.

Research Methodology

The methodology of this study includes a literature search and an analysis of existing research on foreign policy of Pakistan, with special attention to its relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia. This article uses a qualitative research approach and data to conclude the factors comprising the external and internal pressures on Pakistan's foreign policy.

Data Analysis

At present foreign policy of Pakistan is facing serious internal and external pressures. These challenges are creating serious threats to the sovereignty and integrity of Pakistan. Due to the weak economic condition of Pakistan, many challenges directly or indirectly linked with external powers. These external powers interfere in the socio-economic and socio-political situation of the country. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have great influence in the politics and policies of Pakistan. Iran and Saudi rivalry is creating major challenges internally and externally to the foreign policy of Pakistan. Some major issues and their pressure on Pakistani foreign policy are:

- Ideological differences between Iran and Saudi Arabia and rivalry after 1979
- Sectarianism, Terrorism and Extremism
- Yemen crisis
- Pak-Iran gas pipeline
- Balance of power and Iran's Nuclear program
- Iran-US rapprochement
- Syria crisis
- ISIS issues
- C-PEC

Ideological Factor in Iran-Saudi Rivalry after 1979:

Both Iran and Saudi Arabia presents their own type of Islamic government as an exemplary model for the Islamic world, which provides the bases of ideological rivalry between these two leading countries of Muslim world. In fact, neither Saudi Arabia regarded to be the representative of Sunni Muslim nor Iran regarded to be the leader of all the Shiites Muslim population of the Islamic world.

Iran's ideology is to portray the aim of revolutionary government to form a model of true Islamic democracy to set an exemplary form of government, which should be following by the Islamic world. This ideology came into existence after the termination of Pahlavi monarchy through Islamic revolution, making Iran as an Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. This ideology declared monarchy as government that is disregarded by both the religious autonomy and popular sovereignty.

In the first decade of revolution, the main mission of Iran was to export of revolution in the region and to establish this form of ideal government in the Islamic world. The main hurdles in the export of revolution were the secular nationalist Arab monarchies of the Middle East. These monarchies were the threat and challenge to the Islamic revolution of Iran.

Official religion of kingdom of Saudi Arabia is Islam and Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet accepted as their constitution. Saudi Arabia is a religious state and believes in hereditary monarchy. Saudi Arabia portrays a super model of politics and Islamic ideology according to its fundamental law. Saudi Arabia portrays this model as an example to the other Islamic countries. Although there has been a widespread view that Saudi Arabia is Sunni-Muslim state but reality is that, the Saudi royal family has strong connection with Wahhabism near to Salafism. The main principle of Salafism is that Islam should be exercised in the same way as that first three generations of Islam had exercised.

After 1979 revolution, the Saudi government observes the export of revolution as a threatening challenge to their religious ideological leadership of Muslim world. Iran also challenged the model presented by the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Muslim world and declared Saudi government as an agent, serving western interests in the region.

This export of revolution of Iran's government brought serious impacts in the Pakistani society. Iranian government supported the Shia minority in Pakistan. Shia community in Pakistan started protest and violence to enforcement of Iranian model of Islamic revolution in Pakistan. While Saudi Arabia supported Sunni population. Both countries are providing heavy funds to their sect's Madarsas and sectarian organization which has caused intolerance in Pakistani society and give rise to polarization. (Arikan, 2016 p7-9)

Terrorism, Extremism and Sectarianism:

The major internal challenges to the foreign policy of Pakistan are terrorism, extremism and sectarianism. Foreign investors are reluctant to invest in Pakistan. Local investors are shifting their business in other neighboring countries. The 9/11 attacks have a significant impact on Pakistan's foreign policy goals as well as its economy, politics, and society. (Jamshaid *et al*, 2014 p33)

The term 'sectarianism' originates from the word 'sect,' referring to a group of people holding divergent beliefs within the same religious framework (Wilson, 1982, p. 89). It connotes a narrow-minded or prejudiced adherence to these beliefs. Within the Islamic sphere, the primary sects are 'Sunni' and 'Shia' ((Pruitt & Pruitt, 2022)

Sectarianism remained and still exists in every society throughout the history. Due to strong differences in religious / group, opinion creates sectarian violence in a multi heterogeneous society like Pakistan. The most significant destabilizing force in Pakistan, affecting its social, political, religious, and security structures, is sectarianism. This phenomenon has led to unrest, distrust, polarization, violence, and disorder within Pakistani society. Numerous suicide attacks, bombings, assassinations, and terrorist incidents targeting religious sites of opposing sects have occurred. These sectarian groups also exert pressure on the government to refrain from taking action against them. The emergence of sectarianism in Pakistan can be traced back to the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and the subsequent reactions in the Arab world. (Hussain, 1993 p. 21 and V. Pant, 2009, p190)

According to the annual report on Pakistan's national security in 2010, there was a noticeable rise in sectarian violence, particularly targeting Shia communities. Although overall incidents have decreased with respect to previous years. (PIPS, 2011)

The efforts of Iranian government to export revolution in the region and especially in neighboring countries were the main cause of sectarianism in Pakistan. The minority Shia population in Pakistan was highly inspired from revolution in Iran and wished to brought similar changes in Pakistan. Iranian government heavily funded Shaimadarsas and Shai sect organization in Pakistan to gain support and increase their influence an the society. In response Saudi government provided funds to Deo-Bandi and Wahhabi madarsas and

organization to counter Shia influence in Pakistan. Including revolution other external and internal factors that give rise to sectarianism in Pakistan are:

- The Iranian Islamic revolution
- Iran-Iraq war
- Gen.Zia-ul-HaqIslamization policy
- The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan
- Conservative Saudi Arabia
- Role of religious groups and religious political parties
- Poverty and no development work in backward areas
- Iran-Saudi proxy war in Syria, Yemen and Gulf region

The Shia population constitutes 15-20% of the population in Pakistan while Sunnis are in majority. The Sunni and Shia sects are further divided into sub-sects. Sunnis are divided into Barailvi, Deo-Bandi and Wahhabi while Shia are divide into Isna-Ashra(twelfth), Ismailies and Bohra communities. Since last thirty years extremists from Sunnis and shai group have attacked each other many time all over the Pakistan.

Sectarian violence was at extreme in Karachi during1980s and 1990s. Sectarian violence was also there in different areas of Sindh. Violence against opposite political party was also started in Karachi in this period. Sunni-Shai sectarian violence also breed through the nurseries (the network of Madarsas) in Sindh. Thousands of innocent people were assassinated in these extremist violence attacks.

Sectarian violence is not a new omen in Pakistan especially in highest population province, Punjab. The province of Punjab is known as having nurseries (breeding grounds) of antagonism between Sunni and Shai for decades. Several groups are working in south Punjab's district Jhang the main battle field of Sunni-Shai conflicts. Sipah-e- Sahaba Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has their main membership from south Punjab.

Sectarianism isn't confined to Punjab and Sindh; Balochistan has also felt the influence of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Afghan Jihad. What initially started as Baloch militancy against the Pakistani state has evolved into sectarian violence, with multiple groups perpetrating violence in Balochistan. Distinguishing between Baloch militant groups

and sectarian violence groups has become increasingly challenging. Recent data on targeted killings in Quetta city underscores that a significant number of the victims were non-local Shia individuals. The Hazara community Shia population whose overwhelming majority is residing in eastern and western part of Quetta is in constant threat of sectarian killings through bomb blast or suicidal attacks.

After the start of Afghan jihad, the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the hub of sectarianism geographically and ideologically. Sectarian violence is continuously increasing throughout the province. Being on the border of Afghanistan and FATA the KPK has faced political, economic and social changes. During last three decades, this province has become conservative and confrontational region. (Haleem, 2003 p. 463-77)

Saudi Arabia financially supported the Sunni religious parties and their Madaras whereas the Iranian government provides funds to Shia sectarian religious parties and their madaras to spread their ideologies in Pakistan. The number of madaras is increasing day by day due to Iran-Saudi proxy war in Pakistan. Therefore, sectarianism poses a genuine threat to Pakistan's socio-political and economic interests. It has engendered disruption, violence, animosity, and chaos within Pakistani society, challenging the fundamental pillars of the nation's integrity and sovereignty. Sectarian conflicts have led to a surge in suicide bombings, bomb blasts, assassinations, and terrorist attacks.

Sectarianism is a real threat to the external and internal foreign policy objectives of Pakistan only due to proxy war of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan should revise its foreign policy regarding both countries and should restrict the foreign funding to Pakistani madaras. Pakistan should also have a strong check on religious organizations.

Yemen Crisis:

Saudi Arabia and Yemen share a complex and long-standing relationship. The Saudi government views Yemen as an economic and security threat and has always adopted a policy of containment. To prevent state collapse, Saudi Arabia has provided support to whichever regime is in power in Sana'a. The fear of an economic crisis in the Arabian Peninsula resulting in the migration of millions of Yemenis to Saudi Arabia is a significant concern for Saudi policymakers. In the 1980s, Saudi Arabia provided heavy funding to

Yemeni government, tribal leaders, and military. However, the relationship between the two countries worsened after Ali Abdullah Saleh's decision to support Saddam Hussain's Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The Iranian involvement in Yemen is less documented, but they are accused of supporting the Houthi rebel groups against the state. (Financial times, 2014)

The recent takeover of Sana'a by Houthis revealed that they were sponsored by ex-president Saleh, and his loyalists make up a significant proportion of public communities that have patrolled the capital since September 2014. The future of Yemen has become a challenge for Iran's foreign policy, and Saudi Arabia sees the Iranian involvement in Yemen as a serious threat to its security. (Ali & Ahmad, 2021)

The Yemen civil war started in 2015 between the Houthis rebellion and the Hadi-led government. The Saudi-led coalition intervened to restore the Hadi government, resulting in heavy attacks, hundreds of casualties, and huge collateral damage. Saudi Arabia asked Pakistan to support and participate in the Yemen war with its army, but Pakistan rejected this request due to the fear of serious sectarian, security, and socio-economic threats from Iran, a neighboring Muslim country with a significant Shia population. Pakistan decided to act as a mediator due to its close relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran. (Wikipedia, 2015)

After this decision, Following a particular decision, the relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia became tense and strained. The UAE, which is an ally of Saudi Arabia, went ahead and threatened Pakistan with serious implications. Furthermore, the tensions between Iran and Pakistan also escalated after the Yemen crisis. The conflict in Yemen poses a significant challenge to foreign policy, primarily due to the ongoing conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the region and its potential social-economic impact on Pakistan. Recently, the PM of Pakistan and the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan visited Saudi Arabia and Iran to clarify Pakistan's position regarding the situation and to brief them about the internal and external security issues of Pakistan. Pak-Saudi relation became tense. The Saudi ally U.A.E threatened Pakistan for serious implication. Relations with Iran also became tense after Yemen crisis. Yemen issue is a serious threat and challenge to the foreign policy of Pakistan only due to the Iran-Saudi rivalry in the region and its socio-economic impacts on Pakistan. The recent visit of PM of Pakistan and Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan to

Saudi Arabia and Iran. They tried to clear Pakistani position in this situation and brief them about internal and external security issues of Pakistan.

Pak-Iran Gas Pipe Line:

According to a report by the IMF, Pakistan ranks as the 11th largest trading partner of Iran. The plan for an Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline was first proposed in the early 1990s, but later evolved into the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project after India joined. However, India withdrew from the project due to sanctions on Iran. In March 2013, the two presidents inaugurated the construction of a 780 km long pipeline from the Iranian border city of ChahBahar to Pakistan. The Iranian government has already completed most of the pipeline's segment up to the border of Pakistan, and it is now Pakistan's responsibility to complete its part of the project according to the agreement. After being elected in May 2013, the new government of PML (N) announced that it would complete the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project.(Bhutta, 2013) However, no funds have been allocated for this project in the federal budget

Pakistan's government is facing compression from the Saudi Arabia and US to abandon Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project. The project is important for Pakistan to meet its gas requirements and address the energy crisis, but the Saudi government's influence over the PML (N) government is causing concerns. The Iranian government believes that the US and Saudi Arabia are behind the pressure to abandon the project, and the current Prime Minister of Pakistan has close associations with Saudi Arabia.(Press TV, 2013) During Nawaz Sharif's visit to Iran in May 2014, the Iranian supreme leader urged him to take steps towards improving relations between Iran and Pakistan. The reference made to the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project was indirect, but the message was clear- Pakistan should not wait for permission from other governments to pursue the project.(Dawn, 2014)

The energy and gas shortfall is a serious internal challenge for Pakistan's foreign policy. It is causing difficulties for the industrial sector to meet export demands and to maintain the GSP Plus status of EU countries. The shortage of gas is also affecting domestic users and CNG stations. Saudi Arabia and its allies are pressuring Pakistan not to complete the I.P gas pipeline project while Iran is insisting on its completion. Pakistan needs to adopt a policy that serves its own interests and not get involved in Iran-Saudi rivalry.

Iran's Nuclear Program and balance of Power:

The nuclear program of Iran is not acceptable for Saudi Arabia. As Iran's nuclear power will enhance the importance of Iran in the Middle East region. The balance of power would be in the favor of Iran against the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Iran will become supreme power having strong dominance in the region. (Rizwanet al,2014p99)

Saudi Arabia along with USA and Israel have always opposed the Iranian nuclear program and declared it a major threat to peace and stability of the region. Economic sanctions were impose on Iran due to its nuclear program. The newly elected president of Iran in August 2013, Hassan Rouhani leads the Iran into the rapprochement directions with western countries and USA. Iran signed Geneva agreement with six powers (P5+1) United States of America, Britain, China, Russia, France and Germany on its nuclear program and to get rid of international economic sanctions. (Wikipedia,2015)

After successful diplomatic agreement of P5+1 with Iran is the main factor that has shift the power equilibrium in the Middle East in favor of Iran. Due to Iran's nuclear program and its agreement with P5+1, Saudi Arabia is feeling insecure in the changing geo-strategic environment in the region. (Syed,2014)

Many believes that after US-Iran rapprochement, Iran has become the regional power. Saudi Arabia has been apprehensive of Iran's efforts to compete again in the race for the regional geo-political supremacy. The US-Iran deal can shift the regional balance of power in favor of Iran. (Sharma,2016 p 3)

Following extensive discussions, the P5+1 states, along with the European Union and Iran, have established a framework of parameters in Switzerland aimed at devising technical assessments to prevent Iran from attaining nuclear capabilities. The agreement also grants Iran the right to maintain its nuclear fuel cycle infrastructure. All UN resolution passed by United Nations in the past and all nuclear sanctions regarding Iran's controversial nuclear program imposed by EU and US will be lifted on the condition that Iran will fulfill its commitments verified by the IAEA.

Iran will be obligated to adhere to a short-term commitment lasting 10 years, restricting its enrichment facility and centrifuge capacity. After a decade long diplomatic dialogues, the nuclear accord concluded on July 14, 2015. This deal ensured all possible measures to

punish through military and non-military measures. Iran also agreed to freeze further progress on its nuclear program.

The nuclear deal with Iran signifies a sudden shift not only on the global stage but also introduces a significant change in regional power dynamics. After this deal, Saudi government is most likely candidate to acquire nuclear weapon in response to Iran. Saudi government has already formed 34-member countries alliance to restore balance of power in the region.

Conversely, Iran's reentry into the oil markets may disrupt Saudi Arabia's dominance within OPEC. Saudi Arabia stands to lose a substantial market share with the presence of a competitor in both production and exports. The removal of sanctions will improve Iran's GDP, as foreign direct investment will be increased. Moreover, there will be a sharp increase in Iran's foreign exchange reserves. The world's major corporate sector also tends to invest in Iranian aviation, energy, oil industry, and telecom, automobile and technical industries. (Peterson, 2015)

The revival of strategic relation of US and Iran has gradually affected the supremacy of Saudi Arabia in the region. There is a strong internal and external pressure on the foreign policy of Pakistan from Saudi Arabia to join 34-member countries alliance practically. Saudi Arabia is also pressurizing Pakistan to provide short-range nuclear weapon, military assistance and nuclear technology. In Saudi Arabia, there are high expectations from Pakistan regarding military assistance in any crisis. Once again, Pakistan is in a position to make choice one out of Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan has also strong relation with Iran. Due to Iran-Saudi rivalry, foreign policy of Pakistan has always remained under great pressure. Pakistan needs to balance out its relation with both Muslim brother countries. Pakistan should decrease its dependency on both countries. Pakistan must steer clear of any actions that could potentially align it as a strategic asset for one party at the expense of another.

Conclusion

The Iran-Saudi ties in Pakistan's foreign policy have also been the center of negotiations with various global actors and internal forces. Malicious issues, such as terrorism,

extremism, sectarianism, and economic instability, are among the many others that militate against the realization of Pakistan's foreign policy. The local administration's inaction towards radical groups has caused serious sectarian unrest in the area. Political instability makes it difficult for governments with poor economies to implement foreign policies. Beyond their borders, leaders' concerns receive special attention, particularly the relationship between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan's foreign policy. However, the opposition in ideology between Saudi Arabia and Iran has made both countries have proxy attachments in Yemen, and, therefore, the region is increasingly put at risk of instability. Pakistan has chosen sides in the Yemen war by aligning with both Saudi Arabia and Iran, mainly because it links the two countries. The Saudi government, which opposed Pakistan's neutrality in the Yemen conflict, has thus, in its attempt to change Pakistan's opinion in favor of its coalition effort against the Houthi rebels, retorted or replied. The most impactful factor is that Pakistan is in a pipeline gas project with Iran, and it also has to take into account Iran's nuclear program, which has great consequences on the country's foreign policy. The US-induced sanctions against Iran that went beyond the UN resolution sealed the fate of the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project and left Pakistan in an uncomfortable position between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The USA and Saudi Arabia are restive at Pakistan's neutrality in these issues because Pakistan has tried to mediate between the parties to find a peaceful way out.

This consequently gives rise to internal challenges of terrorism, extremism, sectarianism, and economic instability for Pakistan; it becomes important for Pakistan to come up with the appropriate strategy to help attain its goals. The government must come together and establish the pertinent measures for fighting extremist groups, which are part of the long-run plans and the reforms needed to fill the gaps in the ailing economy. Balance of the diplomatic power in the relations of Pakistan's interests should be maintained concerning Saudi Arabia and Iran and not become the victim of ideological competition between these two nations. Pakistan's foreign policy has many problems, so it is necessary to solve internal issues to obtain a well-balanced foreign policy by addressing tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Hence, Pakistan can respond strategically to its different challenges using this strategy, eventually strengthening its sovereignty and integrity.

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