



REVIEW ARTICLE

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Challenges and Opportunities: The Fluctuating Relations Between Pakistan and Iran

Syed Asad Ali Shah

Riphah International University, Pakistan
asad.shah@live.com

Abstract

Pakistan and Iran are considered key players in regional and international politics. Despite their religious and cultural similarities, Pakistan and Iran have had a long history of strained diplomatic ties. This paper explores both countries' significant security and political challenges in maintaining friendly relationships. Furthermore, public perception has also been considered to examine public opinion on the relationship between Pakistan and Iran. This study uses the Gallup and Gilani Pakistan National Survey's (1991 & 2015) empirical polling data on public opinion regarding Pak-Iran relations to understand how Pakistanis view the relationship between the two countries. The survey results indicate that the majority of the Pakistani general public favor Pak-Iran relations. The study shows that Pakistan and Iran have managed to ensure their state survival by making tough security and political decisions that, in many cases, have damaged or even caused disharmony and friction between them.

Keywords: Pakistan-Iran relations, Pak-Iran, Pakistan's foreign policy, Pakistan's security challenges

INTRODUCTION

International relations between states have always been a complex and dynamic field of study. The interactions and relationships between nations are shaped by history, geography, culture, politics, and economics, etc. Understanding the nature of these relationships is crucial for analyzing the behavior and decision-making of states in the international system. One such relationship is that between Pakistan and Iran. These two neighboring countries have had a long and intricate history of interactions shaped by various factors. Pakistan gained independence in 1947, while Iran was the first Muslim country to recognize Pakistan as a sovereign state. This initial recognition paved the way for a positive relationship between the two countries.

Both countries have had a close relationship in their cultural, economic, and political affairs. In 1950, a treaty of friendship was signed between the two nations, further strengthening their relationship (Alam, 2004). However, their cordial relationship was not free of challenges. Both countries have faced internal political instability, external security threats, and economic challenges (Imtiaz, 2019).

The relationship between Pakistan and Iran has become increasingly important in recent years due to developments in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Both countries have been dealing with a war-like situation for almost five decades, which has impacted their bilateral relationship. Furthermore,



Iran's security agreements with India and Pakistan's improving relationship with Saudi Arabia have created a sense of unease between the two countries.

The strategic relationship between Pakistan and Iran is crucial to their foreign policies. Both countries must navigate complex regional and international environments while maintaining their national interests. Therefore, it is essential to examine the nature of their relationship, the challenges they face, and the opportunities they must strengthen their ties in the future.

Pakistan and Iran have long been significant players in regional and international politics. Despite their religious and cultural similarities, the two countries have a history of fluctuating diplomatic ties that have posed major security and political challenges in maintaining friendly relations (Calabrese, 1997). In this paper, we delve into these challenges to understand the reasons behind the unstable relations between the two nations. We also consider the public perception of Pak-Iran relations, utilizing empirical polling data from Gallup and Gilani Pakistan National Survey's from 1991 and 2015. The survey results reveal that despite the challenges, the majority of the Pakistani general public favors a positive relationship with Iran. The study highlights how Pakistan and Iran have maintained their state survival through tough security and political decisions, despite causing disharmony and friction between the two nations (Karim, 2023).

To get a holistic view of Pak-Iran relations, this study has considered Realism as a theoretical framework to understand the complexity of the relationship between the two neighboring countries. Realism is the oldest and most widely accepted theory in International Relations (Guzzini, 2004). It explains international politics as a result of human nature and power. Power is the capability to make another state do something it would not have done otherwise or stop it from doing something it wants. According to Realist belief, there is no international police to enforce cooperation in the international system, leading to insecurity among states and constant competition to ensure their survival (Rossi & Sleat, 2014).

Anarchy is a core concept of political realism, stating that the world lacks political authority at the global level, leaving states with no option but to rely on themselves for their own security (Deudney, 2000). Realists believe that states must refrain from trusting each other in this anarchic world, making cooperation difficult to achieve in the longer run. The Realist school of thought has influenced the foreign policy of both Pakistan and Iran, leading to decisions prioritizing state survival, even at the cost of disharmony between the two nations (Bell, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the major security and political challenges faced by Pakistan and Iran in maintaining friendly relationships and



examine the public perception of their relationship. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from empirical polling with qualitative analysis of historical and contemporary sources.

Data Collection

Quantitative data for this study is derived from the Gallup and Gilani Pakistan National Survey's empirical polling data on public opinion regarding Pak-Iran relations (Gilani & Pakistan, 1991, 2015). The survey, conducted in 1991 and 2015, provides a snapshot of the Pakistani general public's views on the relationship between the two countries. The data from these surveys helps to understand the changing public opinion over time and offers insight into the factors that may have influenced these views.

Qualitative data is collected through a comprehensive review of historical and contemporary sources, including academic articles (Riaz, 2010; Vatanka, 2013; Ali & Zaidi, 2017) and news articles. This review provides context and background information on the diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Iran and an understanding of the security and political challenges that have shaped their relationship.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the Gallup and Gilani Pakistan National Survey are analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns in public opinion. Cross-tabulations and other statistical techniques explore the relationship between demographic factors (such as age, gender, and education) and public opinion in the Pak-Iran relations (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative data is analyzed using content and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Content analysis is employed to identify key themes and patterns in historical and contemporary sources. In contrast, the thematic analysis explores the underlying reasons and factors contributing to both countries' security and political challenges (Flick, 2014).

Validation and Reliability

Multiple data sources are triangulated and cross-verified to ensure the validity and reliability of the study's findings (Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, the study employs a transparent and rigorous methodology, including well-established data collection and analysis techniques.

Ethical Considerations

All data used in this study is publicly available and has been collected through reputable sources. The research adheres to ethical guidelines, ensuring the protection of respondents' identities



and the confidentiality of the information provided (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study also acknowledges any potential biases or limitations and addresses them throughout the research process.

By employing this mixed-methods approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Pakistan and Iran's security and political challenges in maintaining friendly relations and explore the public perception of their relationship, offering valuable insights for policymakers and scholars alike. The analysis of both quantitative data from the Gallup and Gilani Pakistan National Survey (Gilani & Pakistan, 1991, 2015) and qualitative data from historical and contemporary sources (Riaz, 2010; Vatanka, 2013; Ali & Zaidi, 2017) allows for a more robust and in-depth exploration of the various factors that have shaped Pak-Iran relations over time. Through this research, a better understanding of both countries' historical context and contemporary challenges can contribute to informed policy decisions and future academic research in international relations, particularly in the context of Pakistan-Iran relations and regional dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is organized into three comprehensive sections, each delving into a crucial aspect of the Pak-Iran relationship. In the first section, we explore the historical, cultural, and economic significance of Pak-Iran relations by examining the two countries' longstanding ties and shared heritage and the economic cooperation and trade that have contributed to their mutual development. The second section focuses on the factors that have negatively impacted the relationship between the two nations, analyzing various political, diplomatic, and regional issues that have strained their bilateral ties and hindered cooperation. In the third and final section, we discuss the security challenges faced by Pakistan in its relations with Iran, highlighting the complex dynamics in the regional and international context and assessing how these challenges have shaped the overall trajectory of Pak-Iran relations. Throughout the literature review, we aim to provide a thorough understanding of the multifaceted nature of the relationship between these two significant regional players.

The Significance of Pak-Iran Relations

Pakistan and Iran share a longstanding history of political and cultural ties dating back to the 1950s (Ali & Zaidi, 2017). Both countries share a common border and religion, with most of their populations practicing Islam. In addition, they have a shared history with languages such as Balochi and Persian, which is spoken in Iran and have greatly influenced the national language of Pakistan, Urdu (Khattak, 2017). Over the years, they have supported each other during conflict and collaborated in various sectors, including trade, development, investment, and military aid. Despite occasional tensions, their relationship has remained strong, and both nations have taken critical decisions to ensure their state survival. Their relationship has been strengthened by shared interests, including military aid, assistance, mediation in unsettled matters, and a similar vision toward Soviet intervention in



Afghanistan (Ali & Zaidi, 2017). The gas pipeline project and several trade, development, investment, and growth strategy analyses have also contributed to the relationship between the two countries (Khattak, 2017).

Pakistan and Iran have supported each other during times of conflict, with Iran supporting Pakistan against India during the Indo-Pak wars and Pakistan assisting Iran during the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war (Ali & Zaidi, 2017). The two countries have also been members of the Baghdad Pact, which supported each other against other neighbors while equally threatened by the Soviet Union (Ali & Zaidi, 2017).

Pakistan's founder, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, emphasized the importance of nurturing a relationship with Iran in a letter to his cabinet colleague, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, and named him as Pakistan's first ambassador to Iran (Ali & Zaidi, 2017). The successive Pakistani governments gave high priority to establishing bilateral relations with Iran, and in May 1950, a treaty of friendship was signed by Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and the Shah of Iran (Ali & Zaidi, 2017).

Despite tensions over border conflicts, drug smugglers, and extremists, the two countries have collaborated in various sectors, including information technology, entrepreneurship, import and export trade relations, medical and military aid, and the gas pipeline project (Khattak, 2017). The trade between Pakistan and Iran increased from \$500 million to \$1.4 billion from 2005 to 2009, and a "Pakistan-Iran Joint Business Council" (PIJB) was established to avoid trade disputes between the two countries (Khattak, 2017).

Iran sends out 100 MW of electricity to Balochistan in Pakistan, while Pakistan has a security defense against illegal separatist groups existing on the common border of those countries (Khattak, 2017). The gas pipeline project is the most prominent between Pakistan and Iran. China also showed interest in the project as they already proposed a trans-Himalayan pipeline (Ali & Zaidi, 2017).

Pakistan and Iran's relationship has been strengthened by their shared history, culture, and religion. They have supported each other during conflict and collaborated in various sectors, including trade, development, and military aid. Despite occasional tensions, their relationship has remained strong, and both nations have made critical decisions to ensure their state's survival. The gas pipeline project and the Pakistan-Iran Joint Business Council are just a few examples of their successful collaboration. The two nations will continue to work together to achieve their mutual goals and maintain a healthy and strong relationship in the future.



Incidents Damaging Pak-Iran Relations

During the regime of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, Pakistan and Iran had good relations due to their inclination towards the American bloc during the Cold War (Khalid, 2014). However, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 led to a change in Iran's national identity and affected the relationship between Pakistan and Iran, turning them into rivals (Riaz, 2010). The two countries were also facing security threats on their borders with Afghanistan due to the USSR invasion in 1979. The attempts to politicize Pakistan's Shia community and increased cross-border security threats caused tensions between the two countries (Khalid, 2014).

The Iranian revolution also resulted in the zenith of the Islamic Republic's championing of Shia militancy in Pakistan from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s (Vatanka, 2013). The Pakistani Shia community feared the Islamization of Pakistan by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, which could strengthen Sunni extremism (Vatanka, 2013). As a result, Pakistan drifted closer to Sunni Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, and India increased its engagement with Iran, leading to further conflicts (Riaz, 2010).

The arrival of new Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif saw Pakistan becoming even closer to Saudi Arabia due to his strong business and family links, while Iran's case was almost forgotten (Riaz, 2010). Although Pakistan and Iran geographically share Balochistan, which has led to tension due to Baloch separatist groups, the Pakistan military has strengthened border security against such groups, and both countries have agreed to revoke drug smuggling groups operating on both sides of the borders (Khalid, 2014). During the Indo-Pak conflicts over the region of Kashmir, Iran extended its diplomatic support to Pakistan against India in the UN. It provided military arms and aid during both Indo-Pak wars (Khalid, 2014). While Iran did not stop exporting oil to India and did not create financial hardship for India during the oil crises, Iran proved a strong point to Pakistan by providing military support (Khalid, 2014).

Pakistan and Iran face internal and external pressures, including nuclear technology, which is the center of uncertainty. After the A. Q. Khan nuclear technology case, Iran changed its source of nuclear technology, and Pakistan's nuclear expertise lost its significance (Riaz, 2010). Iran sought closer ties with India, further pulling the two countries apart (Riaz, 2010). The geopolitical significance of Pakistan and Iran has put them under extreme pressure from regional and superpowers in various sectors, including their nuclear programs. Any development in South Asia or the Persian Gulf affects both countries due to their common ground (Khalid, 2014). While both countries maintain a steady relationship without any extreme conflicts, they do not share the same cordial relations as in the past (Riaz, 2010).



Security Issues

The relationship between Pakistan and Iran has been shaped by security and strategic interests, with economic and political advancements also being made under the umbrella of the security paradigm (Sulaiman, 2018). The two countries have had conflicting strategic interests and political outlooks in Afghanistan and Middle Eastern politics, leading to a trust deficit (Muzaffar, 2018). Both countries have their own allies and influential partners, including the US, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and other regional powers (Naveed & Ali, 2021).

Iran was convinced of the importance of territorial stability with Pakistan after the partition of Pakistan and the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 (Fasihuddin, 2017). However, the rise of the US as a dominant global power after the end of the Cold War strengthened Pak-Iran relations due to their shared interest in nuclear technology and security cooperation (Fasihuddin, 2017).

During the 1990s, anti-Shia terrorist activities began to rise in Pakistan, and Iran's Consul General Sadeq Ganji was assassinated in Lahore in 1990 (Riaz, 2014). This was followed by the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan, who murdered several Iranian diplomats and thousands of Hazara Shias in Mazar-e-Sharif, leading to a rift between Pakistan and Iran (Fasihuddin, 2017).

In 1999, Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf visited Tehran after coming to power and promised to address issues related to border security, improving relations between the two countries (Riaz, 2014). Relations improved when Pakistan executed Ganji's assassin in February 2001 (Fasihuddin, 2017). Although both countries supported opposing groups in Afghanistan, these rifts gradually vanished after the Taliban's fall in 2001, and Iran's foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi paid a visit to Islamabad to assist in establishing a multi-ethnic government in Afghanistan (Fasihuddin, 2017).

The border between Iran and Afghanistan has also caused tension between the two countries due to illegal gang operations on either side of the border (Bano, 2019). However, since the removal of the Taliban in 2002, neighboring conflicts have eased, and both countries have signed agreements to strengthen economic relations and peace policies with Afghanistan (Bano, 2019). In October 2003, Pakistani Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali paid a return visit to Iran, and in February 2004, both countries became members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), a group of eight developing countries (Fasihuddin, 2017). Additionally, a trilateral commission between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan was established to aid in the reconstruction of Afghanistan (Fasihuddin, 2017).

To sum up, this literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions of Pak-Iran relations by examining their historical, cultural, and economic ties, exploring the factors that have negatively impacted their relationship, and discussing the security challenges faced by Pakistan in its relations with Iran. The review highlights the complexities and intricacies of the



bilateral relationship, emphasizing the importance of considering both internal and external factors when assessing the dynamics between these two regional powers. As we synthesize the insights gained from this review, it becomes evident that Pak-Iran relations are shaped by a combination of historical connections, shared cultural heritage, economic cooperation, and contemporary geopolitical challenges. Moving forward, policymakers and scholars need to continue to investigate these multifaceted aspects and strive to foster a more profound understanding of the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in the evolving relationship between Pakistan and Iran.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section delves into the key findings and implications of the current study, which examines the major security and political challenges faced by Pakistan and Iran in maintaining friendly relationships and explores the public perception of their relationship. Drawing on the empirical polling data from the Gallup Pakistan survey conducted between 1991 and 2015, as well as qualitative analysis of historical and contemporary sources, we discuss the fluctuations in public perception, the role of the Realist school of thought in shaping both countries' foreign policies, and external factors that have influenced their relationship. Furthermore, we highlight the need for continued efforts to strengthen and improve the relationship between the two countries, taking into account the favorable public perception and the challenges identified in our analysis. Moreover, it also focuses on the situation that emerged after the recent economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States (US), and explores its future implications on Pak-Iran relations.

Public perception of Iran among Pakistanis

Gallup Pakistan surveyed between 1991 and 2015 to gather public opinion on the relationship between Pakistan and Iran. The survey showed that the Pakistani public generally favored their country's relations with Iran. The data from the survey indicates that there have been fluctuations in the perceptions of the Pakistani public regarding Pak-Iran relations over the years.

The first survey, conducted in 1991, showed that 22% of the population thought the relations were very good, while 42% believed they were good, 38% said they were satisfactory, 2% considered them bad, and only 1% regarded them as very bad. In 2015, a similar survey revealed that 11% of Pakistanis considered the relations very good, 43% believed they were good, 38% thought they were satisfactory, 2% believed they were very bad, and 5% regarded them as bad. The remaining 1% either did not know or gave no response.

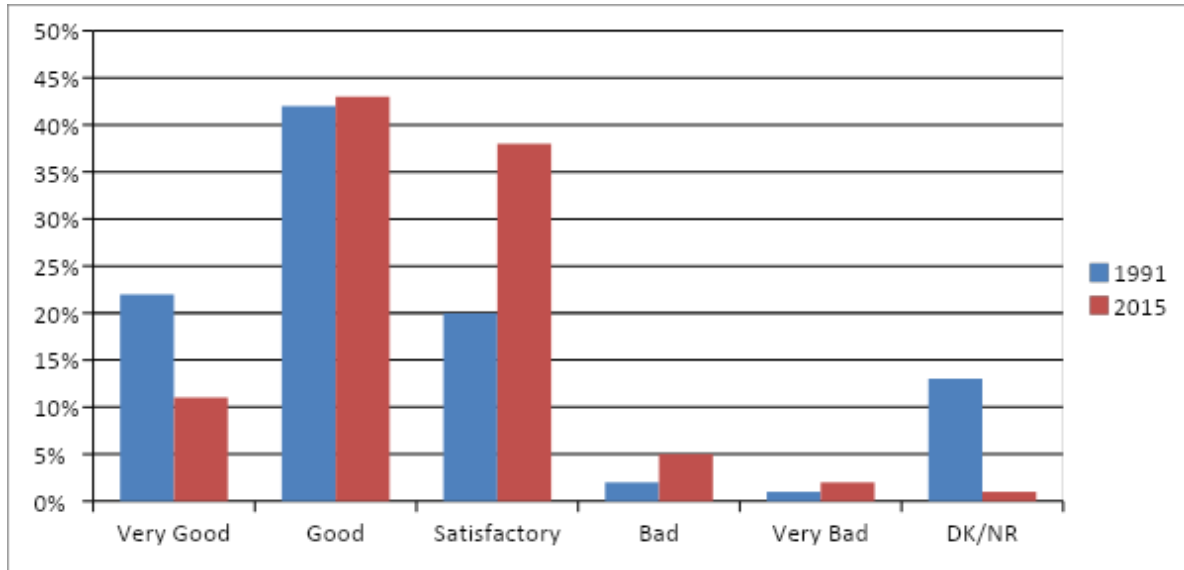


Figure 1: Gallup and Gilani Pakistan National Survey (1991 & 2015) - Empirical polling data – Public opinion on Pak-Iran relations.

Comparing the two surveys, there was an 18% increase in the number of people who thought the relations were satisfactory from 1991 to 2015. Additionally, people who believed the relations were good increased from 42% in 1991 to 43% in 2015. However, there was an 11% decrease in the number of people who believed the relations were very good and a noticeable 3% increase in those who believed the relations were bad. It is essential to note that the remaining 1% either did not know or gave no response.

The survey's results reveal that the Realist school of thought has played a significant role in influencing the foreign policy of both countries, with both nations making critical decisions to ensure their state survival, sometimes leading to friction between them. Additionally, external factors, such as the impact of US sanctions on Iran, have influenced public perceptions of Pakistan-Iran relations.

Overall, the survey conducted by Gallup Pakistan provides valuable insights into the perceptions of the Pakistani public regarding their country's relations with Iran over the years. The survey results highlight the need for continued efforts to strengthen and improve the relationship between the two countries, considering the favorable public perception of their relationship. Policymakers should take into account these findings when formulating strategies to enhance cooperation and address the challenges faced by both nations in maintaining friendly relations.



Sanctions on Iran and their Implications on Pakistan

Iran has been a target of US sanctions for over three decades, with sanctions being imposed since the 1979 revolution (Nephew, 2021). The sanctions have only been increasing since the late 20th and 21st centuries, and since 2006, Iran has been under multilateral sanctions imposed by the United Nations and the European Union (Korab-Karpowicz, 2020). The reasons for imposing these sanctions are varied, including stopping Iran from supporting terrorist activities, limiting its influence in the Middle East, pressurizing Iran to opt for denuclearization, and ensuring that Iran does not continue funding or supporting Hezbollah and Hamas (Shariatmadari, 2021).

The sanctions have significantly impacted the Iranian economy and Pakistan-Iran relations due to the economic ties between the two countries (Alam, 2004). The recent sanctions have affected different sectors of Iran's economy and hampered the completion of Pak-Iran's gas pipeline project (Minghetti, 2021). Iran's oil exports have decreased from 4 million to 1 million barrels a day due to sanctions dealing with the production and shipping of Iranian oil, resulting in a devaluation of the Iranian currency of almost 80% relative to the dollar since 2011 (Karimi & Gambrell, 2019; Alizadeh, 2021).

The global community believes that such daunting sanctions and Iran's cut-off from the global market can push Iran to change its foreign policy regarding developing nuclear weapons (Rostamnezhad et al., 2021). The sanctions have worsened the trade situation between Pakistan and Iran, significantly impacting the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) signed between the two countries (Ahmed et al., 2020). Even though Pakistan and Iran have great potential for trade cooperation, the absence of banking channels has resulted in trade being conducted through informal channels (Hasan & Rezaei, 2020). The sanctions imposed on Iran have caused wider ramifications for Pak-Iran trade relations and may negatively impact any possible conciliation between the two countries in the future.

Recent developments and future implications

Recent developments suggest that Pakistan-Iran relations have been marked by challenges and opportunities during the last two governments in both countries. The governments of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Hassan Rouhani sought to enhance trade, economic cooperation, and security collaboration. However, the rise of the hardliners on both sides, particularly after the 2018 general elections in Pakistan and the 2021 presidential elections in Iran, has somewhat slowed down the momentum of the bilateral ties.

During the previous governments in both countries, the leadership made several efforts to strengthen bilateral relations. In 2016, President Rouhani visited Pakistan to enhance economic, political, cultural, and commercial cooperation. The visit was significant as it provided an opportunity to the two countries to overcome the negative forces and improve security. Moreover, the visit resulted



in the signing of six agreements, including one on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries. This visit was preceded by two visits of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Tehran in 2014 and 2016, where he discussed expanding trade ties and boosting regional connectivity.

However, the pace of progress in bilateral relations has been impacted by several factors in recent years. In Pakistan, the rise of the hardliners after the 2018 general elections has shifted the country's foreign policy towards a more conservative approach. This shift has been characterized by a more cautious approach toward relations with Iran, especially in the context of regional security and strategic alignments. Similarly, the change in the Iranian government after the 2021 presidential elections has led to a more conservative approach toward foreign policy, reflected in Iran's relations with Pakistan.

In recent years, Pakistan's relationship with Iran has been influenced by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). CPEC is a massive infrastructure project that aims to connect China's western region to Pakistan's Gwadar Port through a network of roads, railways, and pipelines (Shah, 2023). Iran has expressed interest in joining CPEC, and Pakistan has welcomed Iran's participation in the project. Iran's inclusion in CPEC could help strengthen the economic ties between the two countries, increase regional connectivity, and promote trade and investment (Akram, 2021).

Challenges and opportunities characterize the current state of relations between the two countries. Despite the slowdown in momentum, there remain several opportunities for enhancing bilateral ties. One of the key opportunities is the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, which could provide a reliable energy source to Pakistan and boost economic cooperation between the two countries. However, the project has faced several challenges, including sanctions on Iran and security concerns in Pakistan.

Moreover, there is a need for both countries to enhance trade and economic cooperation. The signing of the FTA in 2016 was a positive step towards achieving this objective. However, the implementation of the agreement could have been faster, and there is a need to expedite the process of trade liberalization between the two countries. In this context, establishing banking channels between the two countries could play a significant role in facilitating trade and economic cooperation. Fintech can play a significant role in improving the financial situation of Pakistan as well as its neighboring countries (Zaidi & Shah, 2023).

The Pakistan-Iran relations have been marked by both challenges and opportunities during the last two governments in both countries. The rise of the hardliners on both sides has slowed down the momentum of the bilateral ties. However, several opportunities remain for enhancing trade, economic

cooperation, and security collaboration between the two countries. The successful implementation of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project and establishment of banking channels could play a significant role in realizing the full potential of bilateral ties between the two countries.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Pakistan and Iran has been complex and has seen several ups and downs. The historical context of the relationship dates back to Pakistan's independence in 1947 when Iran was the first country to recognize it as a new state. However, the relationship turned sour after the Islamic revolution in Iran and the subsequent security agreements between Iran and India. The relationship remained strained during the periods of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq war.

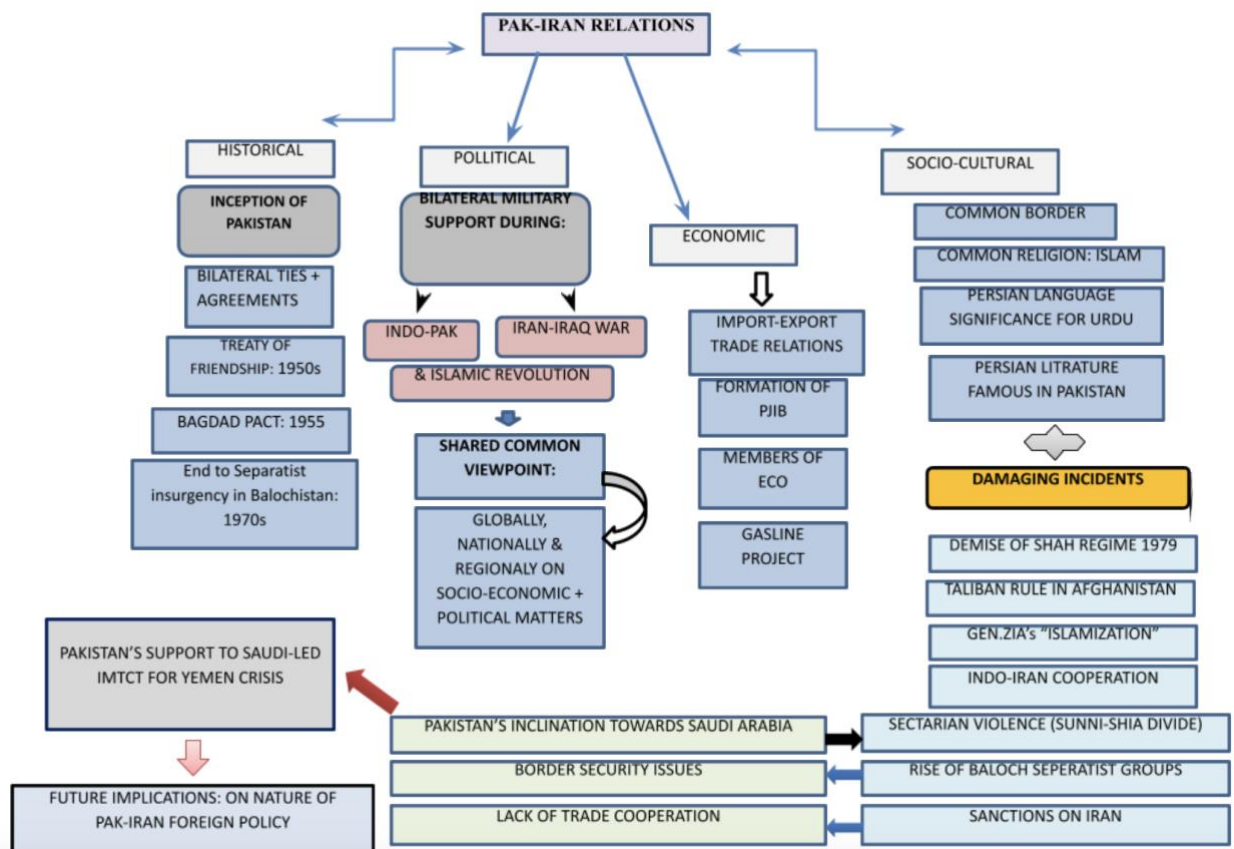


Figure 2: The pictorial explanation of the complex nature of the relationships between Pakistan and Iran.

Nevertheless, there have been positive developments in the relationship between the two countries in recent years. After the demise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the relationship with Pakistan started improving. Many Memorandums of Understanding were signed between the two countries, and the two leaders visited each other's countries in the early 2000s.



The geographic location of Pakistan provides a special advantage for becoming a medium hub between Iran and China for the export of gas from Iran. The IPI gas pipeline is seen as a step towards improved relations in the future. Additionally, Iran, an oil and gas-rich country, will remain a significant attraction for Pakistan for its energy needs.

Despite the various political interests of superpowers such as the USA and Russia and the self-interests of Iran, Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan, the geostrategic position of both countries provides access to landlocked Central Asian states to the warm waters and the Gulf. However, the progress and development of the CPEC with its Gwadar Port and Chabahar Port of Iran could lead to potential conflicts.

In light of this, Pakistan's foreign policy must be structured with caution and wisdom. Building strong and mutually beneficial relationships with neighboring countries is essential for regional stability and prosperity. The shared religion, culture, and values between Iran and Pakistan can provide a strong foundation for this relationship, and the potential for increased trade and energy cooperation offers hope for a brighter future.

Data availability:

Necessary data are available upon request to the author.

Declaration of competing interest:

The author declares that there are no competing interests in this work.

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Ethical Statement:

This study used publicly available data, ensuring transparency and adherence to legal and ethical standards. The author diligently maintained the privacy and confidentiality of all information obtained, upholding the utmost integrity throughout the research process. The study aimed to provide valuable insights without involving direct participants by utilizing existing data sources.

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