

## RECENT TRENDS IN PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST

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### **Abstract:**

Pakistan continues to play an active role in the Middle East. But Pakistani leadership is in a difficult position as Pakistan's influence on Saudi Arabia has become very inadequate while looking on Saudi economic donations and remittances. The Pakistani game of balance in the Middle East may not be a feasible approach. The personal ties between the Saudi and the Pakistani leadership has weakened. This time Pakistani military is also not ready to play role of a central player in normalizing the relationship. On the other hand, there is no single superpower in the Gulf and South Asian region as other regional players has become strong. Instead of the hegemony of a single power, the New World has become a complex network of many countries operating within various alliances, and various pragmatic policies. Saudi efforts of isolating Qatar from the Gulf States, known as the Qatari crisis, has become another Spartan challenge for Pakistan foreign policy makers. Pakistan cannot positively respond to the call of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to reduce relations with Qatar. Saudi Arabia made a fatal mistake in Yemen and pushed Pakistan to agree to send troops to fight in Yemen. Yemen crisis arise on the horizon of foreign relations of Pakistan as a test case to maintain balance between Saudi Arabia and Iran and policies of Iran and Saudi Arabia on Kashmir Issue create situation in which huge mix-up can be expected.

### **Backlash**

1950s to the end of 1970s, Iran was the unquestionable main partner of Pakistan, as the Shah of Iran was playing the role of policeman in the region. This situation continued and changed gradually after the oil crisis in 1973 and due to its consequent economic boom in the Gulf countries. Pakistani workers and military experts were allowed to reach the Gulf for the fulfilment of the gap of men power (Gul & Mahmud, 2012). Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto took advantage for Pakistan's interests and brought the Saudis and Iranians close to extent in making Pakistan strong to

confront the Soviets, and then Pakistan reaped economic, military and political gains from all sides (Khan, 2019). Bhutto has given his juxtaposition to Iran more than Saudi Arabia, and at the same time he continued to flaunt Saudi Arabia's call to lead the Islamic world, adding a valuable Islamic character to Pakistani foreign policy. Even after the Iranian revolution in 1979, which caused disputes between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Pakistan continued to play on both sides on different issues. After him President Zia ul-Haq took money from Saudi Arabia to finance the Afghan jihad, and sent troops to the Gulf to assuage the security concerns of the Arab regimes. At the same time, Zia ul-Haq supported Iran militarily in its war with Iraq despite its caution about the intentions of the revolutionary regime. After him Pakistan's policy regarding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait showed that it would take only limited steps to satisfy Saudi Arabia's desires (Pirouz, 2006). While the government of Nawaz Sharif supported a US-led coalition aiming to get Iraq out of Kuwait, despite the general feeling of support for Iraq inside Pakistan, and Pakistan sent additional forces to Saudi Arabia to protect the royal family. Afghan war created disagreements among Pakistani, Saudi, American, Indian and Iranian aspirations and plans regarding the fate of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and caused many problems in the 1990s in the context of Pakistan's foreign policy for Middle East. Iran send its officials; including diplomats, engineers, and military officials to Afghanistan for its own interests in the name of help of afghan people till 1998. Pakistan was one of the only three countries (along with Saudi Arabia and UAE) to recognize the Taliban regime established in Kabul after 1996. Meanwhile the attacks against Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan in 1998 led the bases of tension in relations between Iran and Pakistan. It is matter of fact that Pakistani interests clashed with Iran largely throughout the 1990s, Pakistan did not take an anti-Iranian stance even after the 9/11 attacks, which put a lot of pressure on Iran. When international sanctions were imposed on Iran over its nuclear program and it seemed that an American attack was imminent, Pakistan took a firm stance against any attack on Iranian soil, fearing the violent reactions of its citizens and of more destruction in the region. Saudi Arabia declared the "Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition" in late 2015. The coalition, which includes 41 Muslim-majority countries, pledged to protect Muslims from terrorist organizations, setting their sights on the Syrian civil war. After Pakistan's decision in April 2015 not to take Pakistani forces into the Saudi attack on Yemen, Pakistan this time quietly joined the coalition (Salam, 2019). However, it did its best to avoid giving the impression that the coalition was an anti-Iran grouping. Here are objective of this study

**Objective:**

To shed light on the challenges to foreign policy of Pakistan in the context of Iran-Saudi rivalry.

To explain the issues and response of Pakistan towards it interests in Middle East.

**Hypothesis:**

Balance approach of Pakistan in its foreign policy towards Middle East has become an uphill task as Pakistan relations with Saudi Arabia are on stake in the continuity of its balance approach in foreign policy about the fresh issues in Middle East.

**Literature Review:**

Alex Vatanka in his book *Iran and Pakistan: Security, Diplomacy and American Influence* has provide very important details about Pakistan foreign policy challenges in the context of its relation with Iran. There are very serious challenges for the US interests in the Asia, Middle East, and beyond due to policies and strategies of Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan and Iran has emerged as to leading nations of the region as they has population of around 300 million. Both nation have been historically, religious and cultural relationship and political history of good neighbors. Pakistan came into being in 1947 and Iran was first nation to recognize it and King of Iran was the first leader of

any nation to visit Pakistan. Nature of relations between Iran and Pakistan was not problematized till revolution in Iran of 1979. While this relationship shifted and the tensions do exist due to Islamite approach of Iranian regime and implications for Saudi and Pakistani relations. The history of collaboration between the two nations remained very pleasant and after the 9/11 the strategic interest US in Afghanistan differ and issue of nuclear proliferation in Iran, and war against terrorism effected the Pakistan and Iran relations. This work is important that explore the conflicts, cooperation and ongoing interactions between Pakistan and Iran that is relevant to the current study (Vatanka, 2017).

### **Research Methodology:**

Research methodology is very important part of the research work as the models and techniques used in the work are crucial elements of any research to enhance the worth of the study. In this work historical method of research is used to explain the historical context and provide the background and descriptive model of research is used to provide the fact about the research problem. The analytical techniques of research are used in this work to analyses the prevailing situation in the region and response of Pakistan.

### **Issues and challenges:**

Saudi-Pakistani relations, which span over seven decades, are based on common social, political, religious and cultural ties. It is no secret to say that Pakistan's urgent need for financial aid and Saudi oil supplies is of great importance within the context of these relations. In 2018, when Islamabad defaulted on its foreign debt, Saudi Arabia rushed to rescue it by providing \$ 6.2 billion in aid to Pakistan (Saudi Arabia signs \$20bn in deals with Pakistan, 2020). Moreover, there are around 2.5 million Pakistanis working in Saudi Arabia, and the remittances they send to their families contribute significantly to supporting Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. It is imprecise to assume that the partnership between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan is limited to granting foreign aid and providing military support. Throughout the past seven decades, the two countries have cooperated to achieve stability and geopolitical balance and serve their security interests in the region during the Cold War and the periods that followed it, and to enhance trade relations between them, and coordination. However, Saudi-Pakistani relations faced some pressures in light of the ongoing war in Yemen and the developments of the Jammu and Kashmir issue. The two countries have also worked to develop a close security partnership, and given the unique role to Pakistani armed forces in the Pakistani politics, armed forces have a vital interest in the relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Historically, bilateral relations have been the strongest under the military government in Pakistan. The 1967 agreement formalized defense cooperation and the sending of Pakistani military and air trainers to Saudi Arabia. In the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, the security understanding between the two sides was strengthened through the 1982 protocol regarding the "assignment of defense from the Pakistani armed forces and military trainers." This resulted in the deployment of nearly 15,000 Pakistani soldiers in the Kingdom. These forces remained in Saudi Arabia throughout the Iran-Iraq war. Although Pakistan was able to consolidate its position with Saudi Arabia as a reliable security and military partner after sending thousands of soldiers to defend the kingdom in the 1991 Gulf War (Fitzpatrick, 2015); The majority of the prevailing issues in Middle East are develop with the rise of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to power. Prince Mohammed bin Salman inherited a kingdom located in an unstable region with an ever-changing balance of power. Before assuming power, Prince Bandar bin Sultan was subjected to criticism and isolation for his handling of the Syrian crisis, and Iranian regional influence was expanding in Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad and Sana'a, and Turkey's ambitions seemed clear outside the Kurdish region in northern Iraq and included Syria, Palestine and the Maghreb, and the Russian-Iranian partnership grew. He has ambitious goals to reform the system of government, modernize state institutions, diversify the economy and develop Saudi Arabia as leading power of the Middle East and beyond. The young prince is seen as an unexperienced reformer who has idea of balance the requirements of reform and

maintain, at the same time, the features of the conservative Saudi society (Hilal, 2019). On the other side in Pakistan, Imran Khan emerged in power when the problems were not only limited to foreign debts estimated at 18 billion dollars, but also Pakistan's involvement in the war on terror that killed more than 26 thousand Pakistani civilians; As well as corruption, poor governance, and dilapidated infrastructure networks were other than these problems. There are lot of foreign policy challenges to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and both nations are passing through the crisis which can end in positive or negative beginning. To address these problems, Khan put forward Pakistan's new vision aimed at strictly implementing the principle of rule of law, ensuring the right to education and health care, alleviating poverty, fighting corruption, and protecting Pakistan from the threats of terrorism. Instead, during such a short period, Khan came under fire from Washington for aiding militants in Afghanistan, and subsequently suffered from the suspension of US aid to Pakistan. On the other hand, Khan needed to end the decades-old Pakistani army's policy of military intervention in Afghanistan, while at the same time seeking to support the US demand to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. With the signing of the peace agreement with the Taliban in February 2020, in Doha, Imran Khan fulfilled both requests. In this context, the Saudi-Pakistani partnership will continue efforts to address the security and peace problems facing the region, chart innovative ways to deal with competing national interests, and set priorities.

In such scenario there are challenges for Pakistan foreign policy for Middle East.

#### **Challenges for Pakistan foreign policy:**

1. A world of competition between China and India
2. Yemen Crisis and security challenges.
3. Saudi security concepts embodied in "great-power competition"
4. Iran strategy towards India and the Pacific basin
5. Iran growing footprint in the wider Middle East
6. Turkey's ambitions to expand its influence.

#### **Turkey-Saudi Rivalry:**

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were on the verge of falling into a diplomatic crisis, when Islamabad agreed with Turkey and Malaysia to hold a summit of Islamic countries in Kuala Lumpur to address issues related to the Islamic world. With Qatar and Iran listed on the podium, Saudi Arabia was increasingly seeing the summit as a challenge to its leadership of the Islamic world, and an alternative to the Saudi-led Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Although some observers say that Islamabad's close relations with Iran, Turkey, Malaysia, and Qatar, and its tireless diplomatic efforts to mobilize international support for the Kashmir issue, will sabotage the Saudi-Pakistani ties, this possibility is very unlikely ("Strained Ties Between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia," 2020), and it is certain that the multilateral relations With a variety of states it can persist, while maintaining balance in the old steadfast relationship with a loyal and steadfast ally. With strong historical ties, the two countries (Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) are facing a rapidly changing global system, with remnants of the past features of the Cold War still emerging on the public scene. The partnership between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan is so entrenched and sustainable that it does not allow these challenges, raised by regional competitors and external forces, to undermine their unique and distinguished relationship throughout history. As relations with Saudi Arabia soured, relations between Pakistan and Turkey flourished, as did the personal chemistry between Khan and Turkish President RecepTayyip Erdogan. During his visit to Pakistan in February 2020, which the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs described as an opening event, Erdogan appealed to the Pakistanis to him, when he spoke emphatically about Kashmir and declared that its matter concerns Turkey just as it does Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan has also started broadcasting a Turkish TV series, which depicts the events leading up to the founding of the Ottoman Empire. Loaded with themes of Islamic awakening, this

show surprised viewers across Pakistan, it was actively sponsored by Khan as well (Shah & Li, 2020). But these Ottoman myths and the TV program endorsed by the Turkish president were not celebrated well in Saudi Arabia, where it was banned.

### **Directions of Saudi Foreign policy:**

Saudi Arabia wanted to form a military alliance to counter Iranian influence, so Pakistan's joining this alliance was necessary for two reasons. The first was that Saudi Arabia needed a political cover for its military alliance. Secondly, Saudi Arabia needed the military strength of the Pakistani army due to the weakness of the Saudi army. Riyadh, although it succeeded in establishing a strong air strike force, but it has always sought to create a small and weak army that is not commensurate with its geographical area and its huge financial capabilities. Weak Saudi army is also in the interest of royal family as they fear that the Saudi army can turn against royal family in the future. Therefore, it needs trained forces for the conflict, especially since Pakistan has a strong army and its use will be useful in the ground war. This is more likely due to the war in Syria and the efforts made to defeat ISIS in Iraq. Meanwhile, Riyadh has led efforts to punish Qatar, a member of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, for its continued sponsorship of the Muslim Brotherhood networks. The combined data of issues such as Washington's refusal to deal quickly with the situation in Syria, the signing of the nuclear agreement with Iran in 2015 known as the "Comprehensive Joint Action Plan" that revived the Iranian economy, and the continuation of the war in Yemen, all of which required the Kingdom to assume responsibility for its strategic security. In an effort to deal with this rapidly volatile geopolitical landscape, Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched the courageous Vision 2030 as a road map that includes education reform, governance, housing, privatization, fiscal responsibility, and other key areas ("Saudi Vision 2030," 2000). And when US Secretary of Defense James Mattis announced the National Defense Strategy in January 2018, through which he shed light on the "great-power competition" by Russia and China, describing it as an "international strategic competition, targeting national security," the US, Pakistan once again found itself in the midst of efforts. Hostility from Washington to contain and isolate the growing Chinese influence. With its huge investment in the world's largest infrastructure development program, China is investing an estimated \$ 900 billion to build the New Silk Road, which aims to support Beijing's trade with a network of land and sea routes linking it to 68 countries in Central Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Pakistan, by virtue of being an ally of China, benefits from this project, as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor attracts \$ 65 billion in investments in building roads and bridges, geothermal energy, and the construction of the largest port overlooking the Arabian Sea in Gwadar.

### **Yemen crisis:**

New challenges emerged for Pakistan's foreign policy makers in 2015 when the Pakistani parliament voted against sending troops to participate in the Yemen war. In fact, the parliament unanimously voted in favor of Pakistan maintaining its neutral position in the Yemeni conflict. The interaction between the civilian and military elites in Pakistan and the Saudi royal family emerged after the bilateral relationship faced a crisis that erupted when the Pakistani parliament rejected a Saudi request to send troops to Yemen in 2015, as part of Operation Decisive Storm. The Saudis were particularly displeased with the lack of support they received from the government of then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who had been their main political representative in Pakistan for decades. Relations had improved due to the strong participation of the Pakistani Armed Forces Command in military alliance and increased security cooperation. This position was supported by several Pakistani forces. ("Yemen conflict: Pakistan rebuffs Saudi coalition call," 2015). In light of divisive policies, the state of political polarization, and accusations of corruption against former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, analysts and media figures have strongly called for a non-military approach with regard to the affairs of other countries. Public opinion, which was still recovering from the war

in Afghanistan and the Western global war on terror, also strongly opposed sending Pakistani forces to Saudi Arabia. However, only 15 months passed until the former Pakistani army chief of staff, retired General Raheel Sharif, was appointed commander of the Islamic Military Coalition to Combat Terrorism, led by Saudi Arabia, with the aim of countering the attacks of the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Successive leaders of the Pakistani armed forces developed a working relationship with the new Saudi defense minister, Mohammed bin Salman, who later became crown prince. When General Raheel Sharif resigned from his position as Commander of the Pakistani Army, he took over the leadership of the Islamic Military Coalition to Combat Terrorism, led by Saudi Arabia. He was succeeded in Pakistan by General QamarJavedBajwa, who also served in Saudi Arabia for three years. Bajwa had a major role not only in strengthening Saudi-Pakistani defense relations, but also in rehabilitating the political aspect of the partnership, as he made more than six trips to the Kingdom. It was under his leadership that the Pakistani army sent a battalion of a thousand soldiers to Saudi Arabia.

### **Kashmir Issue:**

In the downward spiral of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, the repercussions of the Indian escalation in Jammu and Kashmir, and unfulfilled promises to develop infrastructure, or manage the faltering economy, Saudi Arabia publicly criticized Pakistan twice this year: The first - blame for Pakistan's proposal to attend a spontaneous "Islamic summit" hosted by Malaysia. The second regarding the outburst of Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his insistence on holding a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) at the level of the Council of Foreign Ministers with the aim of imposing diplomatic pressure on India, because it abolished the article 370 related to the Kashmir region in Indian constitution. Against a backdrop of rapidly growing geopolitical and economic challenges, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan rests on firm foundations, thanks to strong historical bilateral ties and some mutual geopolitical interests. Despite some gaps in public diplomacy, diplomatic relations between Islamabad and Riyadh continue to evolve to address the challenges facing the Gulf and South Asia regions. The changing security dynamics in the Gulf and the periphery of Pakistan has not weakened this relationship. The partnership of the two countries has brought them together towards more cooperation to review strategies regarding peace and security. Riyadh's investments of \$ 20 billion in developing an oil refinery in the Pakistani port of Gwadar demonstrate the depth of mutual interests between the two countries. However, Pakistani security interests will induce Saudi Arabia to play a sensitive role in maintaining balance in addressing India's ambition to extend its regional influence, human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir ("India: Counterterrorism Raids Targeting Peaceful Critics," 2020) and sectarian violence against Muslim minorities.

### **India-Iran Partnership:**

Another arena for geopolitical concerns in Pakistan's approach for Middle East is the strong Indo-Iranian relationship. The partnership between India and Iran emerged and grew gradually over the course of 35 years, as New Delhi and Tehran worked unremittingly to enhance their bilateral cooperation. The two countries, for example, in 2001, held the India-Iran Strategic Dialogue Conference, which focused on regional and international security affairs, and their respective defense policies. Perhaps the most significant bilateral development was when former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami visited New Delhi in 2003, to sign the New Delhi Charter along with seven MoUs promoting trade, information exchange, cooperation in technology and science, and counterterrorism (The Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Iran "The New Delhi Declaration," 2013). Although there is a common interest between the United States and India in countering China's regional influence, Washington and Riyadh do not fully agree on Beijing. There are many officials in the Trump administration who believe that the Indo-Iranian partnership means that New Delhi ignores the perceived Iranian threats to US interests, and it also means that New Delhi has

failed to, or in other words, refused Washington's help to isolate the Islamic Republic of Iran on the global level. The visit of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to India in February 2018 strengthened the Indo-Iranian partnership by allowing New Delhi to control the operation of the Chabahar port on Iran's eastern coast for a period of 18 months ("Rouhani's visit reflects the many dimensions to India-Iran ties," 2018). In addition, there are projects worth 200 billion dollars, 56 miles from the Pakistani port of Gwadar, run by China, that provide a transit corridor to Afghanistan without going through Pakistan (Hilal, 2019). The level of distinction of Indian-Iranian bilateral relations became evident, especially when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Iran and said: "Chabahar port can become an important symbol that reflects the depth of cooperation relations between Iran and India. India and Iran are not new friends, because our friendship is as old as history (Modi's Iran visit: PM quotes Ghalib, hails dosti between New Delhi and Tehran - Politics News, Firstpost, 2016). With these remarks, Modi ushered in a new era in Indo-Iranian relations. With the Iranian nuclear agreement known as the "Comprehensive Joint Action Plan" lifting international sanctions imposed on Iran in exchange for Tehran's agreement to suspend its nuclear program and accepting visits by international inspectors, India has welcomed strongly and enthusiastically to build strategic, military, technological, commercial, political and cultural partnerships with Iran. According to a 2019 report titled "Coal in India" by the Australian Ministry of Industry, Innovation and Science, India is the second largest importer of thermal coal and the third largest energy consumer, and at the same time it is in dire need of energy resources to meet the growing domestic energy demand (Australian Government, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, 2019). With the signing of the Chabahar Agreement, which includes the construction of a railway to the Iranian region of Zahedan, India has special access to energy sources stretching from southeast Iran to Central Asia. And the ambitions do not stop there. By relying on the port of Chabahar, India is proposing the creation of an international transport corridor between the north and the south, operating under the auspices of New Delhi, Moscow and Tehran. This international corridor was to carry goods in both directions between India and Europe, via Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia. It was also expand the market to receive Indian human capital and Indian consumer products. At the same time, India was to provide Iran and Central Asia with low-cost scientific and material assistance to develop information technology networks, roads, ports, railway projects, and military capabilities. In addition to forming strategic economic partnerships, New Delhi was showing an interest in using its partnerships to combat religious extremism. The largest minority among the population of India is the Muslim minority, with a population of 165 million Muslims. For political reasons, the ruling party (Bharatiya Janata) led by Prime Minister Modi was talking with other commentators about the government's plan to classify Indian Muslims as the "fifth column" threatening the country's stability and prosperity (Gilles & Olivier, 2018). For various reasons, India and Iran were afraid of the spread of so-called jihadist movements, especially ISIS branches, in South Asia, Central Asia, and the wider region. On a visit to India in February 2019, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani made it clear that Islamic Republic was very capable of political and economic cooperation with the ruling Hindu fundamentalist party, especially in areas that serve common political and economic interests. In addition, India continued to face the growing division and polarization between Muslims and Hindus, which was embodied in the demonstrations and riots that took place in New Delhi in January 2020. Modi's relationship with Rouhani provided a good opportunity to alleviate domestic and international concerns about India becoming a country suffering from Islamophobia ("Delhi 2020 religious riots: Amnesty International accuses police of rights abuses," 2020). The bilateral relationship between Tehran and New Delhi was expected to have a major positive impact on Iran's faltering economy. Indeed, India was to help Iran to be in a better position as an effective global trading partner and strong political ally. At a certain level, the Indo-Iranian partnership serves the goal of confronting China's regional interests, which have important implications for Saudi Arabia. While Riyadh wants to improve its trade and expand access to India's markets; it does not want to interfere with Washington's strategy toward India and the Pacific Basin, and effective American

efforts dedicated to containing the Chinese New Silk Road. The region is now at a dangerous crossroads. Either contain the Yemeni problem and work to calm down, in order to reach a solution that satisfies the opposing parties, or it will lead to a greater crisis of affairs in terms of the countries of the region being drawn into the ongoing conflict, which increases its intensity and ferocity. The warring parties know that any crisis of the conflict means that the entire region will be dragged into a relentless war that extends for many years that consumes everyone and everything. Therefore, efforts exerted to find a consensual solution to contain the crisis that is threatening the Arab region and the Middle East as a whole may succeed. The Riyadh government knows that the longer the crisis in Yemen continues, the more complicated matters will be, especially since Yemen's geographical and demographic nature is complex. Riyadh feels that Iran wants to besiege it, as Saudi Arabia in past has encouraged the late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to confront Iranian influence, after the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran. These developments have meanings for foreign policy makers in Pakistan as Iran has open support for Pakistan on Kashmir but has allowed Indian presence on its soil that can be used against the security of Pakistan. Saudi Arabia has specially meanings for Pakistan in the financial and religious context but silence on the issue of Kashmir.

### **Conclusion:**

The refusal of Pakistani policymakers to take sides in the clashes between Arab countries or between Saudi Arabia and Iran reflects their constant fear of internal sectarian belligerent. They also have given Consideration to the economic difficulties that can force Pakistan to remain cautious: Saudi Arabia is an indispensable source of money if the need arises. Pakistan also faces daunting practical problems to ensure uninterrupted access to natural gas and oil. Pakistan meets its energy needs by importing oil and natural gas from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Iran (in addition to small quantities from other countries). The other reason behind Pakistan's preference to avoid taking any decisive political moves regarding the conflicts of Yemen, Qatar are the remittances sent by Pakistani migrant workers from the oil-rich Gulf States to their country. The size of these cash transfers has forced Pakistan to be careful not to cause the deportation of its citizens abroad as a result of the political conflict. Over the past decades, all these overlapping interests and domestic and international restrictions have led to a balance and extreme caution in Pakistan's foreign policy towards Middle East, and made its position on the ongoing conflicts between Arab countries an inevitable necessity, not an option. Pakistan continues to proceed with extreme caution, along a delicate rope imposed by geography on the one hand, and economic and religious influences on the other hand.

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