

Changing Geo-Political Dynamics in Middle East: Implications for Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This study examines how the evolving geopolitical factors in Middle East are influencing Pakistan's foreign policy decisions and security of its national interests.

Methodology: Employing an interceptive as well as descriptive approach along with qualitative research design, the study collected non-numerical data and analyzed it using social science research techniques such as interpretation and discourse analysis. The researchers meticulously analyzed the data, interpreted its various discourses and derived findings and conclusions.

Findings: The study derived its results which highlighted the importance of Pakistan's leadership in responding effectively to these changing dynamics. It emphasized the need for a well-informed foreign policy approach that aligns with Pakistan's national interests requiring a thorough understanding of the evolving Middle East dynamics and careful consideration of implications for Pakistan's own stability and regional influence.

Conclusion: Inclusively, the research study provides valuable insights and policy options for Pakistan. It emphasized the need for a proactive and informed approach to navigate the complex underlying aspects of Middle East, while safeguarding Pakistan's interests and maintaining regional stability.

Keywords: Middle East Dynamics, Foreign Policy, Regional Stability, National Interests.

Introduction

Middle East has been an area of vital significance for quite a long time, with various domains and realms competing for command over the gulf region. The old Persian Realm, the Roman Domain, and the Ottoman Realm are only a couple of instances of the powers that have held influence over the Middle East since the beginning of time. In the mid twentieth hundred years, the revelation of huge stores of oil and gas in the district drew the consideration of worldwide powers. England, France, and the all of us tried to lay out impact in the Middle East, with the last option turning into the prevailing player after The

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Second Great War. The US' partnership with Saudi Arabia and other Inlet states, as well as its help for Israel, have been the foundations of its Middle East strategy for a really long time.

Both oil and gaseous petrol creation are significant to the Middle Eastern economy. This region has 53% of the world's affirmed oil saves and 49% of the world's flammable gas holds. Because of its essential position, the Middle East has long drawn in the consideration of worldwide powers looking to propel their own advantages nearby. Accordingly, contest inside region and dangers from external outskirts had remain persistent. Since it holds the world's biggest oil reservoirs, it has been an objective for global intervention for quite a long time (Zionism).

The world's most remarkable nations were taken into a sort of discreet struggle over the Middle East because of its indispensable significance, austere variety and abundance of assets. A different populace and set of states have formed their way of life and history since ages. The region that was the primary source between the Abrahamic monotheist beliefs and the rest of the world after their establishing in the Levant for Judaism and Christianity and the Arabs' land for Islam, and before the Chinese world and other Asian and American nationalities were integrated into these religions. It is totally not unreasonable to feel that whomever controls the Middle East will likewise control the rest of the globe (Gritly, 2018).

The Arab Spring has shaken Muslim legislatures, prompting interior difficulty and the development of contending groups anxious to hold onto power. Frivolity at home and turmoil in adjoining countries are immediate consequences of ongoing upheavals in various nations. Illegal intimidation, sectarianism, strikingly based on Saudi-Iranian intermediaries, and different issues that emerged because of the Middle East emergencies have hampered Pakistan's advancement toward monetary and political thriving. Regional congregations, for example, the Middle Easterner Association; Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) neglected to unite its remaining states (Mumtaz, 2015).

The regional states' contending advantages are one clarification. Second, we do not have the assets to take care of the issues confronting the countries in our space. Most Middle East countries are controlled by dictator legislatures, notwithstanding the way that they share numerous western objectives. These systems have successfully dismayed in Bahrain by cooperating in the pretense of the GCC following the Iranian ruckus. The fall of Saddam Hussein's rule, combined with the commotion of the Arab Spring, has moved territorial power elements in a way that has assisted Iran with extending its effective reach. Pakistan's hesitance to enlist in the Islamic Military Coalition has long haul suggestions for the nation's discretion. Pakistan's proximity to Arab countries has led to various issues, despite the country's constructive role in the region. This exploration gives a shrewd examination of the ongoing circumstances in Middle East and challenges which might be encountered by Pakistan (Khalil, 2013).

Agreement of the 100 years' and Abraham's Accord trailed by acknowledgment of Israel by the noticeable Middle Easterner states versus ceaseless intermediary/nationwide conflicts in Yemen and Syria are nevertheless a constant debate and mission for regional hegemony. These turns of events, notwithstanding, are probably going to have broad impacts for the locale. Centering upon religious and geo-economics interests, the clashes between global powers have made Middle East as an unstable and dynamic region of the world. Middle East, situated between Egypt in North Africa and Western Asia, received its name "Middle East" originating from the British India Office in 1850.

The United States formally introduced the term "Middle East" during President Eisenhower's speech to Congress on January 5, 1957, which is famously known as the Eisenhower Doctrine. This doctrine aimed to secure congressional endorsement for the provision of aid and military support by the United States to nations in the Middle East that were confronting potential threats from countries aligned with the global socialist movement. President Eisenhower characterized the Middle East as entering a new and pivotal phase in its extensive history. Historically, many of the nations in this region did not have full sovereignty. Geographically, the Middle East straddles the intersection of three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe, covering an expansive 5.0 million square miles of land with a population of approximately 470 million people. Positioned on the Asian continent between Europe and the distant reaches of Asia, it

also maintains strong connections with North Africa. The Middle East is comprised of seventeen countries, with the majority being Islamic nations. These nations include Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Today, the landscape of the Middle East has undergone significant changes, featuring extensive deserts and mountain ranges.

In the globalized twenty-first century, the politics of Middle East have grown increasingly complex and turbulent. Iraq and Syria find themselves in an armed conflict that divides them spanning a border in the desert. Within the capital city of Damascus, Bashar al-Assad maintains control, but his authority does not extend across the entire nation. Despite Assad crossing the "red line" set by President Barack Obama, pertaining to the use of chemical weapons on his own citizens, led to U.S. involvement, UK, and their allies refrained from direct intervention. Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia and its authoritarian coalition seek the ousting of the Syrian president, providing support to rebel forces engaged in combat against him, who are concerned about the potential repercussions from ISIS and al-Qaida. The states bordering the gulf harbor deep-seated animosity toward Shia Iran, backing Nouri al-Maliki in Baghdad and offering support to Assad. Western nations and The UK worry regarding the radicalized individuals coming back from the conflict zones in the Levant. Across the entire region, the principles of Arab Spring got severely disrupted. Egypt, the Arab world's most densely populated nation, currently, Abdel-Fatah al-Sisi governs Egypt. The optimism of Tahrir Square has faded, within a terrain primarily controlled by the military leaders, autocrats, the political landscape is narrowing. Although elections took place in Syria and Egypt, they did not exemplify vibrant democratic and pluralistic processes. Al-Qaida, which had previously seen a reduction in its influence in regions like Afghanistan and Pakistan, has experienced a resurgence, notably from Mosul to Mali. The US and Iran, historic rivals, have overlapping interests in Iraq, yet they continue to have disagreements concerning Syria and Israel.

Middle East is a globally significant region known for its abundant oil reserves, international complexities, and sacred sites. The internal politics of the Middle East predominantly center on ideological, ethnic, and territorial conflicts among its nations. Non-state entities are gaining influence. The security landscape in Middle East has become increasingly intricate due to power struggles, with non-state actors being leveraged by external powers to further their economic interests. Factors contributing to the security challenges in the region include the long-standing Palestinian issue, the destabilizing influence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, military interventions by NATO and the U.S., the controversy surrounding Iran's nuclear program, the crisis in Yemen, tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Iran-Israel war rhetoric, and the reluctance of Middle Eastern leaders to engage in public discourse and assessment.

The contemporary political landscape in Middle East presents a substantial threat to the security of the region. In the context of the modern state, the primary focus of security is centered on upholding a nation's well-being. State security is achieved by protecting fundamental principles, ensuring peace, promoting economic prosperity, guaranteeing survival, maintaining strength, and providing a sense of protection for citizens, assets, and public interests against both internal and external threats of violence. The authoritarian governments in the Middle East have exacerbated the security dilemma. In the present world, many states use the rationale of security or national safety to justify domestic repression and external aggression. Examples such as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Saudi Arabia-Yemen conflict, and the use of force by the U.S. and NATO in Syria and Iraq illustrate this approach to state security. The internal and external security of Middle East is currently confronting significant challenges. These challenges are manifested through the possession of potent capabilities by adversaries, alongside vulnerabilities, internal unrest, and a fragile economic structure, all of which pose threats to the security of Middle East region. The prevailing political dynamics in Middle East undeniably imperil regional security.

Pakistan's dispositions in the Middle East are complex, and the region's changing international elements have critical ramifications for the country. Pakistan has a well-established partnership with Saudi Arabia,

which has been a significant wellspring of financial and political help for the country. The two countries share an important relationship in light of their shared advantages in security, energy and religion. Pakistan likewise shares a long boundary with Iran and has generally kept up with heartfelt relations with the country. Nevertheless, Iran's developing local impact and its competition with Saudi Arabia have made a perplexing dynamic for Pakistan, which looks to keep a nonpartisan situation in the confrontations. The rise of radical groups, for example, ISIS and the Taliban in the region represents a huge security danger to Pakistan. The nation has long battled with psychological warfare and fanaticism inside its own boundaries, and the overflow impacts of struggles in Middle East have additionally exacerbated the security circumstance. Besides, Pakistan's bond with China, which has tried to extend its monetary and political impact in Middle East, have likewise carried this locality's changing elements nearer to home. China's BRI project, which reminisces huge foundation ventures for Pakistan, could be influenced by the changing international and geostrategic dynamics of the Middle East. Pakistan has a close association with Middle East on account of its social as well as monetary relations with its states. Development in Middle East must be perceived in its entirety as it would influence Pakistan somehow, justifying a calculative reaction.

Problem Statement

The changing geo-political dynamics in Middle East have various policy implications for Pakistan and various foreign policy challenges. The situation is complex, changing, based on policy challenges and dilemmas for Pakistan. These include the Abrahamic Accord and the recognition of Israel by major Arabs states. The continued hostile interactions based on proxies between Saudi Arabia and Iran etc. created dilemma for Pakistan foreign policy choices and statecraft. It is the test case of Pakistan leadership that how they respond to these development keeping in view their foreign policy choices and national interests. Hence, this research tends to analyze these changing dynamics in Middle East and assess various policy options for Pakistan for their interests.

Research Objectives

To achieve these objectives, the following research goals have been outlined:

- To analyze the changing geo-political dynamics in Middle East.
- To assess various implications for Pakistan under these changing dynamics in the Middle East.

Research Questions

Examining the evolving geo-political and strategic dynamic in Middle East and the dire implications on Pakistan is a crucial subject matter. Therefore, the researcher has postulated the following research questions listed below:

1. What are the major changing geo-political dynamics in Middle East?
2. What are the implications of the changing geo-political dynamics in Middle East for Pakistan?

Significance of Study

While a stable and psychological warfare-free Middle East best serves the interests of the relative allies, the intricacy of events that obliterate the region is massive. An agreement of the fundamental security gives subsequently arises the main way forward for the convoluted key security difficulties of Middle East. Pakistan, being near the Middle East, can in no way, remain unapproachable. Pakistan's certain security and monetary impulses warrant its proactive national and foreign policies. Hence, it has always been quite challenging for Pakistan to remain non-partisan in the shared contentions and domestic struggles of Middle Eastern nations.

Literature Review

The Middle East is widely recognized as the birthplace of human culture. In recent years, it has gained prominence on a worldwide scale. It is situated at an important intersection of ancient trade routes and is significant politically since it is the cradle of the three world's main faiths. The dogmatic as well as military environment of Middle East has been intensely impacted by events occurring after the downfall of Ottoman Empire, including the discovery of oil in the 1930s, the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 and its subsequent land grab, the on-going Palestine-Israel conflict, Arab-Israeli wars, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the Arab Spring of 2011 (Cordesman, 2015).

The region's geopolitical and geo-economics dynamics, along with the global contest of regional and extra-regional entities, have transformed the Middle East into a battleground for global influences and interests. Many problems have arisen after the fall of Saddam regime 2003. When Iraq grew closer to Iran, American plans went up in smoke. The 2011 Arab Spring, however, sparked renewed optimism. The Arab Spring has resulted to the overthrow of dictatorial rules in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen, but the popular revolt in Syria has been quelled with the help of Assad's allies, Russia and Iran. An upsurge in protests has also been seen in other Arab nations. With the exception of Bahrain, where there have been reports of violent demonstrations, these movements have mostly been nonviolent. This has led to changes being implemented by formerly autocratic administrations (Khalil, 2018).

The Arab Spring has had its greatest negative impact on religious harmony by widening the chasm between Shia and Sunni. Shias have been resurgent in the Middle East since Saddam Hussein's administration collapsed. This is the first time in Arab history that a Shiite government has been founded. As a result, places like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, which have a Shia majority but are controlled by a minority of Sunnis, began to experience unrest. The strong ties between the new Iraqi administration and Iran have only served to further strain already difficult relations. The rise of Shia Islam Power dynamics in Middle East have shifted owing to developments in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen (The Shia Crescendo, 2015). Bahrain's impending disintegration is just going to exacerbate the problem. Iran has been effective in expanding its influence since it is now present in Iraq to monitor ISIS, present in Syria to back the Bashar Al Assad dictatorship, and active in Yemen in some capacity. After 2003, Washington's approach in Middle East had devastating effects on the region. Some allies of the United States were unhappy with the Iraq war (Yamin, 2017).

There is now an even greater chasm between the United States and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states as a result of the post-revolution peace and stability mechanism, which has been most noticeable in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. U.S. Middle Eastern partners had similar feelings about the nuclear agreement with Iran (Cordesman, 2015). The Trump administration's decision to pull out of the 5p+1 nuclear agreement negotiated under the Obama administration was widely condemned by countries throughout the globe, including America's friends. The United States' credibility as a mediator in the dispute has been severely damaged by Trump's recognition of Jerusalem serving as the capital of Israel and the unilateral moves have only served to inflame the situation more. The United States initially backed the Egyptian movement, but once Morsi was elected with a large majority, they took a neutral stance towards the subsequent military coup (Express Tribune, 2015).

The United States has backed regime change in Syria in an effort to topple Bashar al-Assad. Since 2011, however, Bashar-al-Assad has been able to cling to power with the assistance of Russia and Iran. While Moscow backed Gaddafi then attempted to broker a diplomatic resolution to the crisis, they were ultimately unsuccessful. China, on the other hand, has expanded its influence in Middle East through One Belt One Road, and there is conjecture that China is formulating new Middle Eastern policies in an effort to fill the void left by America. Meanwhile, Middle East being the theatre of conflict for over two decades, the European Union has focused much of its efforts there on humanitarian aid. Lack of political and civil rights, as well as poverty, unemployment, high inflation, and a resulting decrease in consumer spending, were major factors that sparked the Arab Spring. Now that the regional power dynamic has

shifted, and sectarian tensions have increased, the region's political instability has grown more acute (Sorenson, 2018). Already, U.S. brokered events like the "Deal of the Century" and the "Abraham pact" have begun to re-spark the region's delicate security calculations. Pakistan's close cultural and economic ties to the Middle East have put it in the position of having to make some difficult choices about how closely to identify itself with the Middle East. Pakistan is under the need to monitor regional developments and react appropriately due to domestic pressures and economic aspects (The News, 2020).

History of Middle East Regional Security Complex

- Numerous contemporary conflict dynamics in the region can be traced back to events and developments during the interwar period.
- Enmity between Arab nations
- Tensions between Palestinians and Jewish settlers were overtly visible in the 1930s.
- Conflicts within the region (Lebanon versus a larger Syrian territory).
- The rise of Arab nationalistic sentiments.

(Yapp, 1991, 49–208; Barnett, 1998; Podeh, 1998)

Inter-Arabs Rivalries

Barnett (1998) has emphasized that the presence of Arab nationalism has resulted in more discord than concord within the region. The region is marked by robust and varied inter-Arab and inter-Islamic interests. Inter-Arab disputes often revolve around the contest for supremacy within the Arab world. Furthermore, there exist traditional rivalries related to territory, ideology, familial interests, and matters concerning imperial expansion. Islamic movements frequently display resistance in Arab states, with Islamic nations like Iran often perceived as a significant threat by many neighboring countries (Karawan, 1997). There is an observable degree of interaction between Arab and non-Arab components, as well as among different Arab factions. It can be contended that, in general, the Arab versus non-Arab discourse takes precedence over Arab versus Arab conflicts, although exceptions do exist.

Buzan and Waever go on to divide the Middle East Regional Complex into three sub-complexes, consisting of two that hold substantial influence and a third that carries less weight.

Figure 1: *Middle East Security Complexes in Sub Complexes*

The Levant	The Gulf	Maghreb
<p>Formed (1930-1948)</p> <p>Central Conflict</p> <p>Israel versus other Muslim countries</p> <p>State Actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel • Egypt • Syria • Lebanon • Jordan <p>Non-state Actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plo • Hamas • Hizbollah • Hamas <p>Military, Financial and Rhetorical Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq • Iran • Saudi Arabia • Kuwait • Libya • Tunisia <p>(Tibi, 1993, pp.183-4 ; Barnett, 1998, pp.121-3; Dervis and Shafik, 1998, p. 508)</p>	<p>Formed</p> <p>After Britain's withdrawal from the area in 1971.</p> <p>Central Conflict</p> <p>A triangular rivalry among:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran • Iraq • The Gulf Arabs • Saudi Arabia ▪ Kuwait ▪ Bahrain ▪ Qatar ▪ United Arab Emirates ▪ Oman <p>Tibi, 1993, p. 171) he</p> <p>1979 revolution</p> <p>Ideological rivalry between</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi Arabia • Iran <p>(Chubin and Tripp, 1996, pp. 15 & 71)</p>	<p>Weaker sub complex</p> <p>A shifting and uneasy set of relationships among:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libya • Tunisia • Algeria • Morocco • Western Sahara <p>Central Conflict</p> <p>The Moroccan annexation of Western Sahara starting in 1975 (McNeill, 1963, pp. 618-28; Hodgson, 1993, pp. 194-5).</p>

Buzan and Waever 2003

The conflict in the Middle East stemmed from common factors such as regional disputes, ideological rivalries, power struggles, and status competitions, all of which were intertwined with natural resources issues. (Ayoob, 1995, Barnett, 1998).

Contemporary Middle East

The current uncertainties in the Middle East can be traced back to the U.S.-supported invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was an extension of the American War on Terror initiated after the intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 following the 9/11 attacks (Haqqani, 2015). While each state in the region grapples with its own unique set of complex challenges, the overall landscape is shaped by a combination of persistent issues related to governance, demographics, economics, religion, and ongoing social transformations taking place in the region (Crisis Group, 2015). Sectarian and ethnic divisions have become increasingly entrenched, evolving into a growing source of tension and conflict over time. Among the two major actors in the Middle East, the region is influenced by the United States as the global superpower and Saudi Arabia as the pivotal regional player (Bilgin, 2015, p.5).

Super Powers' Involvement

The heightened presence of the global superpower became more prominent in the aftermath of the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Lustick (1997) presents a state-centric viewpoint on the complex history of the region with the West. He contends that one can view the history of this region as an ongoing endeavor by Western powers to thwart the rise of a strong Middle Eastern nation. While the superpowers did not directly dictate the dynamics of alliances and conflicts among Middle Eastern states, they did exert their influence on the region in three distinct manners. Primarily through the provision of

arms, they influenced the distribution of power, often tending to exert control and occasionally taking advantage of regional actors.

1. At times, the interventions of superpowers have effectively dampened or managed conflicts among regional states. This has been notably observable, especially with the United States since the end of the Cold War.
2. The international arena was regarded as a significant origin of both challenges and a way to perpetuate regional competitions. This perspective extended beyond a mere restatement of the global political economy's securitization, although certain aspects of that phenomenon were also evident in the Middle East.

The United States presently holds a pivotal military position in combatting the Islamic State. This includes a blend of initiatives aimed at supplying arms and training to neighboring countries, along with frequent airstrikes directed at Islamic State forces. Moreover, the United States organizes extensive air campaigns carried out by various allies, involving both Arab and European nations (Byman and Moller, 2016, p. 294).

The War on Terror

The term "The Great War on Terror" is frequently used to describe the military and political endeavors initiated by the United States and its allies in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Among the primary objectives of this war was the eradication of international terrorism, with a particular focus on Islamist extremist groups like al-Qaeda and their associates. The War on Terror stands as one of the most detrimental factors in the Middle East. Today's War on Terror differs significantly from that of 2003. Rather than bringing peace to the afflicted region, it has led to increased suffering, disorder, and instability. It has spread rapidly, affecting countries like Libya, Syria, and Yemen, and has given rise to a more extensive threat in the form of a new extremist group, IS (Council on Foreign Relations, 2015). This group, based in Syria and Iraq, has committed acts of unprecedented cruelty. The failure of secularism, the absence of social and economic security, and the lack of effective governance have driven a substantial portion of the population in Arab world toward religious fanaticism. The emergence of IS has prompted an unlikely coalition of foreign military forces to address the current threat. The Middle East, North Africa, and a significant part of the Islamic world are entangled in a complex web of intensifying crises.

The Arab Spring

Some individuals in various Middle Eastern countries lived under the rule of dictatorial leaders who presented themselves as public representatives. The Arab Spring was initiated in 2010 with the aim of catalyzing change in the conflict-prone Arab nations throughout the Middle East and North Africa. However, its impact ultimately proved limited in substantially transforming the lives of Arab citizens (Cockburn, 2015, p.2). Citizens in these nations voiced their dissent against authoritarian regimes through extensive protests, resulting in the removal of leaders such as Tunisian President Zein El Abidine Bin Ali, Libyan President Mu'ammar al Qadhafi, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. (The Economist, 2013). Following the ouster of the Libyan President, NATO forces, in conjunction with the local population, took action against him.

The outcomes of these conflicts and uprisings were numerous. Tunisia was among the affected countries during the Arab Uprisings and successfully implemented a new Constitution with widespread agreement. However, other states have not yet fully achieved their desired goals. They continue to grapple with significant challenges related to governance, the rule of law, security, and the intricate equilibrium between religious and secular principles. Back in 2016, Middle East remained a focal point of global attention, primarily due to the various crises erupting across the region. The Arab Spring has transformed into a substantial security concern for the Middle East and the global community. Hence, it can be deduced that the Arab Spring is not an unequivocal success nor an absolute failure. It will take a

considerable amount of time to assess the long-term consequences of these uprisings. The far-reaching consequences of the Arab Spring along with ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen have significant global implications. Oman, too, has the potential to become a source of contention due to the uncertain succession plans following the health issues of Sultan, who lacks a clear heir to the throne. The Sultanate managed to weather the challenges posed by the Arab Spring, although there have been persistent grievances, especially in the Dhofar region and other bordering areas (Hussain, 2015). Oman's capacity to tackle these challenges can be credited to the Sultan's legitimacy and the injection of financial aid from Saudi Arabia after 2011. The Arab Spring initiated a phase of considerable unpredictability and instability in Bahrain. Bahrain confronted sectarian divides, with a substantial portion of its population following the Shia sect, while the government was primarily Sunni-dominated. The uprising was quashed by the Saudi military, which entered Bahrain at the request of the Bahraini government to suppress the protests that erupted in 2011 (VOX, 2015).

Israel-Palestine Conflict

Moreover, the Israel Palestine tensions remain ongoing with no discernible conclusion. The enduring instability and unpredictability within the region have created opportunities for the dissemination of extremist propaganda. Presently, the Middle East is even more precarious than it was in 2001, characterized by frequent and perilous attacks spanning Europe and the Muslim world. This has, in turn, fostered the growth of radical elements on either side of this strife-afflicted region.

Religious Extremism

The concern regarding religious extremism, sectarian violence, and the struggle for the future of Islam is a significant issue in the Middle East. Its impact, however, extends well beyond the region, affecting the broader Islamic world and countries like Pakistan. Pakistan has successfully managed to mitigate a substantial portion of the challenges originating from its western border. Nevertheless, any attempts by ISIS to gain significant ground in Pakistan are unlikely to pose as formidable a threat as they did in Iraq or Syria. Nevertheless, issues related to economic hardships, political instability, and poor governance indicate that religious radicalization remains a concern and could potentially become a significant challenge for the country.

Middle East Situation's Spillover in Pakistan

This ever-evolving and uncertain situation in the Middle East has unexpectedly posed a complex challenge for Pakistan, resulting in varying public opinions. For a state already contending with domestic security challenges, the growing polarization presents a formidable policy dilemma. Despite the multifaceted responsibilities it holds, Pakistan has been cautious not to become entangled in unstable scenario pertaining to politics. It has refrained from armed forces interference in numerous conflicts and has instead focused on maintaining a position of neutrality and playing a role as a mediator. Pakistan has carefully balanced its relationships with Middle Eastern states. The situation in Middle East could potentially impact Islamabad's economic progress whose impact is felt in two distinct ways: first, through its influence on the amount of remittances from the oil-rich Gulf States to Pakistan, and second, by fostering a less stable security environment characterized by radical and sectarian inclinations within Pakistan. Hence, it is imperative for Pakistan's leadership to dedicate themselves to formulating and executing strategies to confront these challenges (Rizvi, 2014).

Furthermore, Pakistan's foreign policy plays a crucial role in its challenge against radicalization. Equally important is the need for Pakistan to minimize significant policies shifts. In its endeavors to combat terrorism, the military extends its support to all sectors and state institutions. The National Action Plan (NAP) constitutes a holistic strategy for counter-terrorism, incorporating a multifaceted approach. This approach ranges from carrying out sentences for convicted terrorists to curbing hate speech and dismantling the financial networks of terrorists, with the overarching goal of eliminating radicalization in Pakistan (National Action Plan, 2014). If effectively implemented, NAP offers a comprehensive

framework to address the ongoing challenges.

Evolving Geo-Political Dynamics and their Features

The geo-political and vital elements of the Middle East have gone through tremendous changes. One of the key factors that have added to these progressions is the Arab Spring, which started in 2010. The Arab Spring prompted critical political changes in the district, with numerous tyrant systems being toppled or debilitated. This made a power vacuum that was immediately filled by different non-state entertainers, including psychological oppressor gatherings like ISIS and Al-Qaeda. The upsurge of non-state actors in Middle East has had critical ramifications for Pakistan. Pakistan has for some time been an objective of fear based oppressor gatherings, and the ascent of gatherings, for example, ISIS has prompted expanded precariousness in the locale. This straightforwardly affects Pakistan's security, as it has prompted an expansion in cross-line assaults by aggressor bunches working from Afghanistan. One more element that has added to the evolving geo-political and key elements of the Middle East is the changing idea of local power structures. Iran has arisen as a significant provincial power, testing the predominance of customary Middle Easterner powers like Saudi Arabia. This has prompted expanded strains among Iran and the Bedouin states, especially Saudi Arabia. The pressures among Iran and Saudi Arabia have had critical ramifications for Pakistan. Pakistan has customarily kept up with close binds with Saudi Arabia, and it has likewise kept a mind boggling relationship with Iran. The strains between the two nations have prompted expanded tension on Pakistan to favor one side, which has set it in a troublesome position (Naz, 2015).

Propositions for Pakistan

Pakistan's foreign policy has as its central tenet the promotion of amicable ties with other Muslim States. When fighting broke out among Muslim nations, Pakistan took a position of neutrality. Foreign policy regarding Muslim nations is made clear in a statement from the foreign office that reads, "We do not intervene and we do not take a side" (Pakistan Foreign Office, 2014). Pakistan has a significant problem in maintaining its neutrality in light of the outbreak of the Yemen crisis, which is inextricably connected with the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Saudi Arabia has publicly stated its ambition to enlist Pakistan in an Islamic military coalition to aid in the assault against Yemen. Pakistan was forced to make tough foreign policy decisions after the Saudi proposal to join the fight against the Houthi's. Iran has made its opposition to Pakistan's participation in the crisis clear. The introduction of sectarianism into the nation would be catastrophic if Pakistan became involved in any way.

Various incidents in Quetta during Ashura manifest how sectarianism may spread across the nation in response to a regional crisis, such as the one in the Middle East. Yet, one cannot deny Saudi Arabia and Iran's influence in Pakistan. In retrospect, Zia's Islamization initiatives might be seen as the origin of sectarianism in Pakistan. Sectarian violence has resulted in a high number of deaths. About 4,734 persons have been murdered in sectarian conflict between 1989 and 2014. South Asia Terrorism Portal is publishing the report. The Saudi-Iranian proxy conflict, which is fueling this sectarianism, cannot be ignored (Khalil, 2018). The sectarian strife at home would be fanned by the crisis in the Middle East. Many scholars are of the opinion that regional sectarianism would have been exacerbated if Pakistan had joined the war against Yemen. There is a risk that religious extremists who see the continuing crisis in the Middle East would be inspired to create their own terrorist groups modelled after ISIS. Policymakers also have to deal with disagreements inside the government about how to approach Yemen's international situation. In contrast, the Sunni Deobandi and Ahl e Hadis supported war, while the Shia populace seemed to be on Iran's side. As a result, the shift in the Middle East makes it impossible to ignore the sectarian tensions between Shia and Sunni Islam.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research is grounded on qualitative research and descriptive in nature. Both primary and secondary data is gathered and analyzed in this research study.

Theoretical Framework

The concerned theoretical framework for the current study is based upon interpretivist and descriptive approach. As per this methodology, it is vital for the researcher as a social actor to acknowledge variances among various stakeholders. Furthermore, interpretive research is typically centered on implication and might employ manifold approaches in order to reveal diverse facets of the subject.

Research Approach

The research involves the inductive method of reasoning, as the researcher aims to begin the exploration of specific observations then moves on to detecting pattern from the varied responses collected through the primary and secondary resources. It eventually allows the researcher to form a tentative explanation that can easily be analyzed.

Research Strategy

The research strategy being utilized in the current study is based on descriptive and interpretive techniques. Grounded theory is an approach that aids the researcher to examine some specific phenomenon and discern new theories, centered upon the assemblage and exploration of the real world.

Research Methodological Choices

The methodological choice used in this study is mono-method. As the study is based on qualitative research, therefore, it comes under the ambit of mono-method.

Research Time Horizon

The research time horizon in the current study is cross-sectional. The advantage of cross-sectional study design includes feasibility of different variables at the same time.

Technique and Procedure

Once the scholar gathers the data on the research topic it will be analyzed through social science research technique of interpretation and discourse analysis. After analyzing the data carefully and in depth, the researcher will analyze and interpret data and will drive various meanings and discourses and then will reach on the conclusion and major findings.

Population of the Study

As the research is based on qualitative approach, therefore, the population includes the security experts from academic and journalism domain who have expertise on the matter being researched.

Sample Size, Sample Frame and Sampling Technique

Maximum 15 respondents were interviewed including five from academic, five security experts, five journalists or experts on the Middle East. The scholar was stopped to bring new participant if it is observed that the data saturation point starts. The sample was selected through simple random technique methodology.

Sources of data (primary and secondary data)

This research study was based on secondary sources as well as primary sources. The secondary sources included books, research articles and journals, newspapers and the preliminary research on the available topic. Primary sources included open ended interviews with security experts on Middle East.

Data Collection Tools

The books, academic articles and journals were used for primary sources and interview for secondary sources respectively. Sources of books, academic articles and journals are enlisted in the references and bibliography section at the end of the thesis. Sources of interview conduction were fromed the population of security experts and journalists. Interviews were conducted in Pakistan. Maximum 15 respondents were interviewed including five academics, five security experts, five journalists or experts on the subject matter of Middle East. The scholars were stopped bringing new participant if it is observed that the data saturation point starts.

Data Collection Procedure

Firstly, the primary data was gathered from books, academic journals or articles. The descriptive analysis provided in relevant books, academic articles and journals was taken from the respective sources and further analyzed in the results section. Moreover, the secondary data was collected through taking interviews from different security experts and journalists on the said matter. Their responses were recorded and thoroughly analyzed in the results section.

Data Analysis Technique

Once the scholar gathered the data on the research topic, it was analyzed through social science research technique of interpretation and discourse analysis. After analyzing the data carefully and in depth, the researcher analyzed and interpret data and drived various meanings and discourses and then reached on the conclusion and major findings.

Delimitation

The major focus of this study was based on the changing geo-political dynamics in Post-Abrahamic Accords in Middle East since 2020 and its implications on Pakistan. The scholar will mention the time period after completion of the research work.

Results

The descriptive analysis centered on the changing geographic politics dynamics in Middle East were taken from various sources such as research articles and academic journals. The detail presented with the respective references as below:

The Middle East in Flux

The Muslim world, addressing twenty percent of total populace, comprises of fifty seven nation states, command more than 70% of the world's assets and half regular assets. By claiming this large number of resources, the Muslim world by and by ought to have been the best power. Be that as it may, wealthy in everything except unfit to settle debates and encased in a heap of struggles helpless before powerful forces underneath defensive military authority. "Muslim questions continue to be ignored over an extended period. Palestine is worn out and might be close to surrender. Iraq is as yet consuming. The Islamic world is exceptionally turbulent and susceptible" (Legrenzi, 2016). While some nations possess abundant natural resources, others remain economically disadvantaged. The Middle East underwent a transformation following the ousting of Saddam Hussein's rule in 2003. The invasion of Iraq by The US, which had stirred a sense of purpose among Muslim nations cemented countless regional security challenges.

The Arab Spring that swept through the Middle East in 2010 was initially seen as a positive modification but ultimately resulted in dire consequences. One of the significant outcomes was the emergence of ISIS millions of fighters from countries, which had a profound impact on various regions of Iraq and Syria as they fought against Shia influence. The circumstances simply demolished prompting dictatorship systems creating in the greater part of the nations like Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen and making issues for the states. The changing situation has revived new issues upon the grounds of previous ones. The circumstance in Middle East is characterized by progressing dogmatic aggravations, progressively developing partisan separation and inconveniences, and provincial struggles prompting the specific locale in motion and emergency (Zehra, Fatima, and Khan, 2018; Yamin, 2017).

The Arab Iranian Conflict

The longstanding animosity between Arabs and Iranians dates back to ancient Islamic history, stemming from their religious affiliations. Arabs are predominantly Sunni, while Iranians adhere to the Shia branch of Islam. The roots of this antagonistic relationship can be found in the Iran-Iraq war, during which the predominantly Sunni Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia, largely supported Iraq's military efforts. When post-Saddam Iraq came under Shia rule, it heightened Arab concerns. Leaders in Sunni-majority Arab states worried that the rise of Iraqi Shia power might serve as an example for their own Shia populations, intensifying strains. King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia openly expressed concerns regarding Iranian influence in Iraqi government, fearing that it could empower Shia, ultimately disrupting the outdated sense of balance between these two opposing sects. The Arab sentiments were further strained after the U.S. shifted its focus in Middle East due to the Iraq war. While the U.S. had historically been a significant ally of the Gulf States, circumstances changed after the Iraq invasion, leading to significant differences between the two sides. (Yamin, 2017).

This scenario was intricate for Islamabad for it had close relations with both sides. Despite their differences, Pakistan maintained generally positive terms with Iran, enjoying alliances in region. The nuclear deal of Iran with international community presented trade and business opportunities for Pakistan, and Tehran helped meet Pakistan's energy needs. On the other hand, the same can be said for Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia, which has consistently offered support to Pakistan, both in terms of international backing and assistance when needed. For example, Saudi Arabia granted Pakistan with billion dollars in 2014, creating employment prospects for Pakistanis, subsequently producing unrecorded remittances (Papanek, 1967).

As per Kasuri, (2015) Pakistan opted for a mediation role in the Saudi-Iranian conflict, urging both nations to resolve their disputes through peaceful and harmonious means. Pakistan has consistently sought to alleviate tensions through diplomatic channels to prevent any hostility and violence on the international stage. The then Head of State, Imran Khan, during a conversation with a newspaper stated that, "I believe that every conflict has a political solution. I am not an advocate for a military solution." He also expressed, "I am committed to promoting peace in the Middle East, as it is deeply troubling to witness the suffering of Muslims in fellow Muslim nations. The Muslim world is already grappling with multiple conflicts, spanning from Libya and Somalia to Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan itself. These conflicts collectively undermine our collective strength, and Pakistan is eager to contribute to the efforts of conflict resolution and reconciliation to quell these hostilities" (Sorenson, 2018).

The central theme revolved around averting the establishment of any sectarian divides that could potentially sow discord within the Muslim Ummah. This is rooted in the principles and guidelines delineated in Article 2 of Pakistan's Constitution, which designates it as the fundamental and primary responsibility of the state to mediate conflicts among Muslim nations, enhance their relations, and advance global peace as a means of ensuring overall harmony. Moreover, Article 29 of Pakistan's Constitution imposes a clear and direct obligation on all political offices, government departments, and authorities in Pakistan, as well as every Pakistani citizen serving in any official capacity, to adhere to and act in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan. This legislation offered

Pakistan an opportunity to bring the issue of sectarian division and violence to the international forefront and actively seek a constructive solution to a longstanding problem that has proven resistant to viable resolutions. This issue persists as a challenge for Pakistan due to the significant loss of life in the region resulting from this division, with no willing parties stepping forward to take responsibility, thereby perpetuating the deadlock. (Gasp, 2009).

Israel-Palestine Conflict

As a nation founded on its Islamic identity, Pakistan is naturally concerned about global support for the Palestinian cause. Pakistan has consistently attached significant importance to the Palestinian issue, particularly with regards to Jerusalem. Israel is perceived as an adversary and an ongoing threat to Pakistan's security. Pakistan has consistently stood in support of the Palestinian cause, championing the complete realization of the objectives and aspirations articulated by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). These objectives encompass the removal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories, delineated by pre-1967 borders, and the creation of a sustainable, sovereign Palestinian state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Pakistan has additionally reiterated its dedication to fostering peaceful coexistence with Israel.

The Pakistani Ambassador to the United Nations, Maleeha Lodhi, expressed firm condemnation of the acts of violence perpetrated by the Israeli military in Gaza during Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting. Pakistan not only criticized the UNSC for its failure to condemn the violent acts of the Israeli military in Gaza but also called for an impartial and independent investigation by the UNSC into these actions. The violence perpetrated by Israel has been ongoing, as exemplified by an assault on the Gaza border that resulted in the death of 60 Palestinians and left around 2,700 others injured due to the use of toxic gas by the military (Arnald, 2019). Pakistan encourages the major powers to initiate a peaceful resolution to mediate Middle East issue in order to establish peace.

Conclusion

To conclude the findings of current study, the researcher presented the final judgment obtained from the primary as well secondary sources data. From the data recorded through the primary sources, it is examined that the changing geopolitical and geo-strategic dynamics in the Middle East since the ratification of the Abraham Accords have been a subject of earnest attention. In 2020, the Abraham Accords represented a notable transformation in the region as these developments paved the way for the establishment of diplomatic ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. Such pacts not only reshaped regional alliances but also had wider implications for power dynamics and regional security. From the interviews conducted, it is evident that the Accords have fostered greater cooperation between Israel and Arab nations, challenging the traditional narratives and alliances in the Middle East. This realignment has raised concerns and opportunities for Pakistan, a country with historical ties to Arab nations and a stakeholder in regional stability. The evolving dynamics have prompted Pakistan to reassess its foreign policy approach, considering the potential impact on its relationships with Arab nations and its traditional stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Additionally, the changing landscape has implications for regional security and Pakistan's role in combating terrorism, promoting stability, and pursuing its economic interests. As the geopolitical and strategic dynamics continue to evolve, Pakistan must carefully navigate its diplomatic engagements, foster regional cooperation, and adapt its policies to effectively address the emerging challenges and opportunities. By leveraging its historical ties, promoting dialogue, and maintaining a balanced approach, Pakistan can contribute to regional stability and secure its national interests in this rapidly changing Middle Eastern landscape.

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Conflict of Interest


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