



Mohammad Irfan Ali \* Rana Eijaz Ahmad †

\* Department of Political Science, University of Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.  
Email: [fani.ics@gmail.com](mailto:fani.ics@gmail.com)

† Department of Political Science, University of Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

**Abstract:** *This article highlights Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Yemen crisis in the background of deep-rooted social, cultural, ethnic and religious cleavages between two regional rivals, Saudi Arabia and Iran. As, Pakistan always claims to be neutral towards Saudi-Iran rivalry. By using the qualitative method, the researcher has designed a criterion of analyzing the neutrality in Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Yemen Crisis. As, there are multiple indicators of neutrality that can help in measuring Pakistan's position of neutrality towards Saudi-Iran rivalry in Yemen Crises. Moreover, by explaining the factors behind the Saudi-Iran rivalry, this article further answers questions such as which theory explains best explain Pakistan's position towards Yemen Crises? What are the drivers of Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Middle East? Is Pakistan really neutral towards the Middle Eastern crises? If yes, then to what extent and why? How do external threats to Pakistan's political, economic, and Ideological interests contribute to creating a discrepancy in its proclaimed neutral position*

**Key Words:** Saudi-Iran Rivalry, Pakistan's Foreign Policy, Neutrality, Yemen Crises

## Introduction

Yemen is the area where the interests of both rivals appear to have collided. Yemen, situated in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, is one of the poorest, second-most populous, and underdeveloped countries in the Arab world. All the affairs in Yemen are deeply rooted in social, cultural, ethnic, and religious cleavages between the competing powers of the region, which clarify the direction of Yemen's political affairs. Strong relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran have been the central part of Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Middle East in persuading its national interests. Both the countries have a substantial influence on Pakistan's political, economic, and ideological affairs behavior. Pakistan has been playing the role of mediator in resolving the tensions between the regional rivals. Hence, neutrality towards Middle Eastern affairs has remained a major part of Pakistan's foreign policy. This is the only area of Pakistan's foreign policy

where All Bhutto's successors followed the same principles towards Middle Eastern states.

Pakistan's foreign policy towards Middle Eastern politics is often understood with regards to the nature of the multi-dimensional relationship with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan has maintained strong and cordial relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran and has always been claimed to be neutral towards Middle Eastern affairs. One cannot understand the engagement of Pakistan with Middle Eastern affairs only by studying the ideological context. To map out the contour of Pakistan's neutrality towards Middle Eastern politics, one has to acknowledge certain context-specific reference points. However, contemporary changes in the Middle East have set a challenge not only to the diplomatic decision-makers in Pakistan but also to the academicians who are concerned with studying Pakistan's foreign policy behavior towards the Middle East. Recent and significant changes in the domestic

conflicts, transnational affinities, regional state ambitions, and role of the great powers in Middle Eastern affairs provide a comprehensive understanding of this cold war between two regional rivals. The present situation in Yemen can be explained by comprehending the long-term historical trends of the Middle East in the background of Saudi-Iran rivalry.

### **Historical Background**

Historically, from 893 to 1962, Yemen has been ruled under the regime of Zaydi Imamate. Although Zaydism is a branch of Shi'ite Islam but doctrinally different from "Twelver Shiism", which is the main branch of Shia Islam in different parts of the Middle East [\(Sharp, 2019\)](#). In 1990, after the unity between North and South Yemen, the patrimonial and ad hoc regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh was extended to the south. On the contrary, in 1990, a political party was formed named Al-Haq based on the Zaydi school of thought in Shi'ite to contest the first legislative elections in united Yemen, held in 1993. Furthermore, Hussein Badr al-Deen al-Houthi, a member of parliament who belonged to the Al-Haq, joined the youth wing within the Al-Haq named Al Shabbab al- Moumineen, which concentrated on the revival of Zaydism. After leaving Parliament in 1997, Al-Houthi, travelled abroad for further education. He returned, and after 9/11, he started to promote his rhetoric by adopting anti-establishment and anti-foreign intervention stances. As the Saleh government issued a warrant for his arrest, al-Houthi fled to Yemini province in the north called Sa'dah, where he was captured and killed in September 2004 [\(Salisbury, 2015\)](#). Resultantly, Abdelmalek al Houthi, the late founder's brother, took charge and converted this movement into a devoted military and political group, which became more popular in northern Yemen since the emergence of the Arab Spring in 2011.

In early 2015, Houthis took over the Yemeni capital Sana'a, moved south from the capital city and demanded the resignation of the country's transitional president, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who was backed by the US due to his support in

the global war on terrorism against Al-Qaeda. Furthermore, President Hadi sought asylum in Saudi Arabia and appealed international community for intervention. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia, with the support of the international community, started a military campaign in Yemen in order to restore Hadi's government. United Nations (UN) provided partial support to the Saudi-led military campaign against Houthis under the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2216 to avoid the use of violence by all parties involved in the conflict. Resultantly, this country has been overwhelmed by a civil war between two distinct coalitions, the Shiite Houthis supported by Iran and the government of Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi supported by Saudi Arabia and the USA. Unlike the other civil wars as the result of Arab Spring, the Yemen crisis has reached the point where no party to the conflict can claim to be victorious. This domestic civil war expanded to the proxies of various parties occupied in the hostility at regional and international level. Domestic conflicts are deepened and prolonged by the regional powers, and regional interests and actions are driven by external players in the chess of the Middle East [\(Salisbury, 2015\)](#).

Iran has always been accused of backing the Houthis by the western and Yemeni official media. In February 2014, an article was published in the Financial Times which authenticated Iran's involvement in supporting the Houthis financially and logistically by quoting Yemini officials [\(Salisbury, 2014\)](#). In September 2014, as Houthis took over the capital, Alireza Zakani, an Iranian Majlis deputy and very close to Khamenei, was reported to have claimed victory over four major capitals [\(Monitor, 2014\)](#). In summer 2018, a confidential report was provided by the United Nations Panel of Experts on Yemen, which accused Iran of supplying the advanced weapon to Houthis, which was the direct violation of the international arms embargo. Furthermore, after the inspection of debris from missiles fired by the Houthis, the UN experts reported that a number of weapons used in conflict by the Houthis were produced outside Yemen, and the missiles had

similar characteristics to the weapons system known to be produced in Iran [\(AFP, 2018\)](#).

Although Saudi Arabia advocated the policy of containment and maintenance in Yemen, on the other hand, a weak and dysfunctional Yemen at a certain level is viewed as attractive by Saudi Arabia. As [\(Salisbury, 2014\)](#) mentioned, the statement of King Abdul Aziz was against the strong and stable Yemen due to the perceived threats to the security of Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the United States has persistently assisted Saudi Arabia and other allied states to counter Iran's influence in Yemen's political affairs. As in 2019, CNN accused Saudi Arabia, and UAE of the violation of end-user foreign military sale agreements as both countries have provided US military equipment to the local Yemeni groups against Houthis in Yemen [Sirgany\(Sirgany, 2019\)](#).

### Objectives of Study

The goal of this article is to analyze the scale of neutrality in Pakistan's proclaimed neutral foreign policy towards the Saudi-Iran rivalry in Yemen. Yemen is selected due to the direct use of Saudi-Iran proxies to influence regional political affairs. While discussing Iran and Saudi Arabia as key regional players, this article would investigate the question, is Pakistan really neutral toward the Saudi-Iran rivalry in Yemen? If yes, then to what extent and why Pakistan's foreign policy is neutral towards these key players of the region. Furthermore, this article explores the different factors that influence Pakistan's behavior towards the Yemen crisis. In doing so, the researcher will provide the reasons behind the discrepancy in Pakistan's proclaimed neutral position towards the Middle East and its practical application. Throughout the course of this article, the researcher will study the influence of different factors such as economic and security, ideological factors, geopolitical factors, historical and religious affinities, global factors, and religious credentials in Pakistan's political parties on Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Middle East.

### Research Questions

The explicit research questions formulated for this article are:

- What are the drivers of Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Yemen crisis?
- Is Pakistan really neutral towards the Middle Eastern crises? If yes, then to what extent and why?
- Which theory of international relations best explains Pakistan's foreign policy behavior towards the Yemen crisis?
- How do external threats to Pakistan's political, economic, and Ideological interests contribute in creating a discrepancy in its proclaimed neutral position?

### Methodology

This article has qualitative scope, like Yemen, selected as the case study to explore the nature of Saudi-Iran rivalry and Pakistan's position on the Yemen Crisis. Thus, every incident is not commendable while searching for the regular and distinguishable patterns in the field of foreign policy analysis. In this study, the researcher explores the factors that influence specific foreign policy and Pakistan's general behavior towards Yemen Crises. In doing so, the discrepancy in Pakistan's position would be analyzed by applying the different indicators of neutrality defined by international law.

The data sources in this article for analyzing Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Middle East give a constant expression of Pakistan's behavior over time. The impact of different domestic, ideological, economic, geopolitical, and situational factors on Pakistan's foreign policy allows the researcher to integrate different perspectives of IR. As Hill presents seven fundamental expectations regarding foreign policy, such as maintenance of territorial integrity and social peace against external aggression, advancing prosperity, protection of citizens abroad, projection of identity abroad, decision making regarding the foreign interventions abroad, embracing a stable international order, and protection of global common [\(Hill, 2016\)](#).

Furthermore, the researcher would not scrutinize all aspects of the selected issue but focus on the relevant aspects where Pakistan has directly confronted the Saudi- Iran rivalry. At the end of each case of Yemen, to ease the reader's comprehension, the researcher would define different indicators of neutrality to analyze Pakistan's position of neutrality towards Yemen Crises.

### **Islamic Military Alliance and Pakistan's Role**

Previously, Saudi Arabia has already been attempted many times for military cooperation since WW2 to deal with the different security challenges on many fronts, such as Iran at the eastern side, terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda on the other side, Houthi rebels and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), etc. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has made several attempts to deal with these security challenges by establishing many Alliances at the regional and international level, such as Saudi's participation in Arab League Joint Defense Pact and then joining the Middle East Command and the Middle East Defense Organization to counter the perceived security challenges. Historically, a view of Saudi military growth shows that Saudi Arabia has lost trust in all these alliances due to the lack of experience and tactical expertise.

Subsequently, in 2015, Saudi Arabia announced the formation of a nearly 40 member's strong Muslim military alliance to reestablish Saudi Arabia's smeared Muslim character, to minimize the influence of Iran in the different parts of the Middle Eastern region by building military collaborations between signatories (Gaub, 2016). Pakistan has always been forced by Saudi Arabia to back its different military operations not only in Yemen but in the other parts of the Middle East (Operation Decisive Storm and Operation Restoring Hope) with troops and equipment. As (Jenkins, 2016), concludes the negative consequences of this alliance by indicating that this is a Sunni alliance that will deepen and reinforce the sectarian divide between Shia and Sunni states of the region. He interrogates the goals of an alliance which will fight against Iran's proxies in different parts of the

Middle East, especially in Yemen, Palestine, Syria, and Iraq, rather than to fight against ISIL. Furthermore, Jenkins concluded that this is the matter of Saudi Arabian prestige to increase its political and ideological influence in regional affairs instead of establishing a real alliance. Subsequently, the formation of this alliance would give a protector to Sunni segments of the Middle East. In this Backdrop, Pakistan, with a quarter Shiite population, has always been uncertain towards Saudi expectations due to the political repercussion at home. In addition, Pakistan's military has been engaged in fighting against different terrorist organizations for a long. Resultantly, in 2015, Pakistan's parliament decided to opt for a neutral stance on the Yemen conflict instead of joining the Saudi-led military alliance, fearing it would threaten Pakistan's determination to create a balanced relationship with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Nevertheless, the Pakistani parliament voted against Saudi's expectations regarding its participation in the Islamic military alliance against Houthis in Yemen due to its relationships with other Middle Eastern states, which have significant importance not only at domestic but also strategic policies of Pakistan (Mustafa, 2007). The decision to be neutral in the Yemen crisis became the reason behind the deterioration of relations between Pakistan and other Arab states. As in an article published in April 2015, in *The Diplomat* (Panda, 2015) suspects that forthcoming Chinese financing maintained Pakistan's persuasion in standing neutral on Yemen crises, and this significant move will indeed cause the deterioration in relations between Pakistan and Arab states. As of April 12, 2015, Dr. Anwar Mohammed Gargash, UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, was reported to warn Pakistan to pay a heavy price on its vague and contradictory stand on Yemen crises (Times, 2015). However, against these common apprehensions, new developments in Yemen became the source of new challenges for Pakistan not only in Yemen but in the other conflicting areas of the Middle East. Surprisingly, despite Pakistan's decision of non-participation in the military coalition, Saudi Arabia flabbergasted many countries by awarding

Pakistan a leading role in its Islamic Military Alliance to the terrorist activities in different parts of the region to promote coordination and support military operations (Syed, 2015). Following these developments, then sitting Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif, however, joined the closing ceremony of major multinational counter-terrorism activities conducted by the coalition of twenty countries (Dawn, 2016). In this backdrop, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) was motivated to assist the military alliance in different domains against extremism and fundamentalism (Dawn, 2016). However, Pakistan's ambivalent stance on IMA remained challenging due to its political repercussions and sectarian divide while ignoring many other domestic and external strategic dimensions.

Following these events, in December 2017, as the result of a ballistic missile attack on Saudi Arabia from Houthis rebel in Yemen, a successful ministerial meeting between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition was reported to be held in Islamabad where Pakistan strongly condemned the attack and started to provide training to the Saudi military forces against warfare in Yemen (Ishtiaq, 2017). Furthermore, Pakistan sent former army chief retired Gen Raheel Shareef to take up the command of the 41-nation Islamic Military Alliance while guaranteeing the deployment of the separate force of 5,000 army men to protect Saudi Arabia from different security threats (Syed, 2017). Gen Assiri, the Saudi defense forces spokesman, was reported to say that the alliance was not limited to defying terrorist organizations such as ISIL and al-Qaeda, but at the request of any member state, it could also move against any rebel group and militia like Houthis in Yemen (Syed, 2017). Conspicuously, all the 41 members of the coalition are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). However, at the formative phase, this alliance became Sunni dominated as it excluded 23 other Shia majority members of OIC with Iran, Iraq and Syria (Gaub, 2016). Subsequently, the exclusion of Shia majority states highlights the sectarian aspect of

the Islamic Military Alliance which pushed Pakistan into an uncertain position. As, (Saleem, 2017) mentions in her article that the decision of joining this alliance or being neutral was a hard choice for Pakistan's foreign policy decision-makers. This article further notified that Pakistan should be cautious regarding foreign policy decision making towards the Middle East because of its geostrategic location and long historic associations with Gulf countries.

### Analysis of Pakistan's Proclaimed Neutral Position towards Yemen Crises

To begin, this article will review the defined indicators and analyze whether they are present in Pakistan's proclaimed neutral position towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the context of the Yemen Crises. As the foregoing literature review indicates that there are multiple indicators of neutrality that can help in measuring the state's position of neutrality towards the Middle East. These indicators are derived from the international law of neutrality and international treaties particularly, the Paris Declaration of 1857, the Hague Convention 1907 No.V & XIII. Existing literature also designates many factors due to which states adopt the position of neutrality. In order to measure Pakistan's position of neutrality towards the Middle East, possible indicators must be defined of what exactly Pakistan's position towards the Middle East would look like.

- Non-participation in military alliance or military non-alignment;
- The neutral state may not augment the war-making capacity of any belligerent by keeping itself away from the conflict; mediation and mitigation the sources of tensions between belligerents;
- Refusal to provide any military assistance;
- Obligation to prevent belligerent use of neutral's territory to transport troops.

In doing so, I seek to explain the ratio of neutrality in Pakistan's foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran.

### **First Indicator: Non-participation in Military Alliance or Military Non-alignment**

In 2015, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) denied to join Saudi-backed Islam Military Alliance against Houthis rebels in Yemen. But, after the joint parliamentary session held regarding the Yemen crises, Pakistan expressed apprehensions that joining Saudi-led forces not only would annoy Iran, which shares a 780-km border with Pakistan but also would create a sectarian divide within Pakistani society, that could impact continuing military operations against different militant groups in northern areas (Khan M. , 2015). Surprisingly, despite all these apprehensions and fears, Pakistan's inclusion in the Saudi-led Military Alliance with 5000 military personnel is the violation of the first indicator of neutrality- non participation in military alliance or military non-alignment. Over the course of their bilateral engagements, neutrality is not an option for Pakistan as, Saudi Arabia became a "mover and shaker in Pakistan's internal affairs" due to the close links with the Pakistani military establishment (Rana, 2015). As, the late Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz said, "Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are one Country; they are more than friends and more than brothers" (Khan M. U.-H., 2012). Historically a number of defense treaties have been signed to provide military and technical support to Saudi Arabia since 1960. In 2009, Pakistan offered direct military assistance to Saudi Arabia during the fight between Saudis and Houthis along the Yemeni-Saudi border in Southwestern region of the Arabian Peninsula (Khan, 2013). In particular, Pakistan sent former army chief retired Gen Raheel Shareef to take up the commend of 41-nation Islamic Military Alliance while guaranteeing the deployment of the separate force of 5,000 army men to protect installations against terrorism and to prevent any infiltration into Saudi Arabia (Syed, 2017). Furthermore, Gen Assiri, Saudi defense forces spokesman, was reported to say that the alliance was not limited to defying terrorist organizations such as ISIL and al-Qaeda but at the request of any member state, it could also move against any rebel group and militia like Houthis in Yemen

(Syed, 2017). Additionally, along with troops from twenty nations, Pakistan had participated in 'North Thunder, a large military exercise launched by Saudi Arabia in February 2016 (Smith, 2016). Following these events, it is clear that Pakistan could not manage to avoid participation in the military alliance as proclaimed neutral state.

### **Second Indicator, Mediation and Mitigation the Sources of Tensions between Belligerents**

The second indicator of neutral foreign policy is to mediate and mitigate the sources of tensions between belligerents. Although Pakistan has been claimed to play the role of mediator between regional rivals to mitigate the sources of tensions between them. As, in 2014, Pakistan conducted a session of Pakistani representatives in different countries of the Middle East and Gulf in Islamabad where the Prime Minister of Pakistan communicated that Pakistan would adopt the policy of neutrality and non-interference in the Middle East (Yousaf, 2014). Previously, during the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq in 1980-1988, Pakistan had successfully tried to mediate by conducting a meeting between the higher leadership of Iran and Saudi Arabia during the OIC Summit in Islamabad in 1997 (Kashif Mumtaz, 2016). Even though, Pakistan seems to be willing to play the role of mediator in Saudi-Iran rivalry, in the case of Yemen Pakistan promised to back Saudi-led Military campaign against Houthis due to the extensive pressure by Gulf Countries. As, on April 12, 2015, Dr. Anwar Mohammed Gargash, UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, was reported to warn Pakistan to pay a heavy price on its vague and contradictory stand on Yemen crises (Times, 2015). Resultantly, Pakistan decided to serve the Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance, which jeopardized all its efforts to balance relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran. As Gen Assiri, spokesman of Saudi defense forces, said that this alliance could attack on any rebel group like Houthis in Yemen, supported by Iran, at the request of any member state. Admittedly, Pakistan's participation in the Saudi-led Military Alliance to combat rebel groups

in Yemen may be an indication of Pakistan's failure to play the role of mediator to mitigate the sources of tensions between the two rivals. Subsequently, the case study detailing Pakistan's foreign policy behavior towards Saudi-Iran rivalry in Yemen crises does not reflect any clear expression of Pakistan's mediation efforts to reduce the tensions between two rivals in Yemen.

### **Third Indicator: Refusal to Provide any Military Assistance**

The indicator of neutrality is avoiding augmenting the war-making capacity of any belligerent state by refusing to provide any military assistance during the conflict. In applying the third indicator of neutrality on Pakistan's neutral foreign policy towards the Middle East, Pakistan always prefers conducting joint military exercises with Saudi Arabia. Historically, military alliances had always been contributed in providing resources and ideological support to the member state such as NATO and Warsaw Pact. Military alliances are an effective means of expansionism and used to expand and grow by the member states. Given the above-mentioned objectives of a military alliance, Saudi Arabia is intended to use this alliance to expand its ideological and political influence in the Middle East against Iran. Subsequently, being a member of the Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance, Pakistan with the most powerful military and only atomic power in the Islamic world, cannot avoid augmenting the war-making capacity of member states especially Saudi Arabia. As some American observers argue that the huge investment in Pakistan's nuclear program bring Saudi-Arabia under Pakistan's security Umbrella. Moreover, reports appeared assuming that a secret agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia was signed where Pakistan would deliver Saudi Arabia with atomic weapons in case of threats by another nuclear power [\(Riedel, 2008\)](#). Additionally, Nawaf Obaid, in his article, articulates that Saudi Arabia would spend \$80 billion to form around sixteen atomic power devices to operationalize the concept of nuclear defense doctrine to counter Iran [\(Obaid, 2015\)](#). Furthermore, [\(Karlin, 2012\)](#) identified the factors behind the renewed military

and nuclear cooperation between the two rivals by estimating Saudi Arabia's expenditure on defense to counter Iran's asymmetrical strengths. To ensure its dominance in the region, Saudi Arabia has taken numerous actions by allocating \$64 billion to initiate an expansion in its military capability in 2016. Additionally, dispatching of 1,000 troops to Saudi Arabia in 2018, Pakistan looks like joining one of the camps in Saudi-Iran rivalry in Yemen [\(Mir, 2018\)](#).

As, many reports indicate that Saudi Arabia is the largest importer of arms manufactured by the armed forces-run factories such as Pakistan Ordnance Factories, Heavy Industries Textila, Pakistan Aeronautical Complex, Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works, National Radio Telecommunication Corporations etc. [\(Dilawar, 2017\)](#). In addition, a series of joint military exercises between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have been conducted repeatedly by the naval forces, land forces, air forces since 2011.

However, the above analysis shows that Pakistan is unable to avoid the augment in the war-making capacity of Saudi Arabia and has failed to keep itself away from the conflicts between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan's military support to Saudis during the conflict with the Houthis, its inclination to align itself with Saudi-led IMAFT and the dispatching of 1,000 troops to Saudi Arabia signify that Pakistan remained unable to refuse Saudi Arabia to provide military assistance. It shows that third indicator of neutrality is not appeared in Pakistan's position of neutrality in the Yemen crisis.

### **Fourth Indicator: Obligation to Prevent Belligerent use of Neutral's Territory to Transport Troops**

The fourth indicator describes the obligations for the neutral state to prevent its territory from the transportation and training of belligerent troops. Obstinate, Pakistan continues to provide military support to Saudi-Arabia as, in February 2018, Pakistan Defense Minister Khurram Dastagir was reported to reveal in his policy statement in Senate that Pakistan is training

10,000 Saudi soldiers in its soil (Latif, 2018). This report did not reveal further detail regarding the nature of training being imparted to such a high number of Saudi troops on Pakistan's soil.

Historically, the growing defense cooperation between the two countries was started in 1967, when Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a bilateral defense treaty, promising Pakistan to provide military and technical assistance to the Saudi military through the direct provision of manpower and technology. In response to

military assistance, Pakistan receives economic support from Saudi Arabia (Khan, 2012). In particular, Pakistan's inclination to support Saudi Arabia.

Admittedly, Pakistan's military relations with Saudi Arabia do not reflect any apparent expression of neutrality as despite Iran's deep concerns, Pakistan has failed to fulfill the obligation to prevent itself from training and transporting Saudi troops on Pakistan's soil.

### Pakistan's Position on Yemen Crises

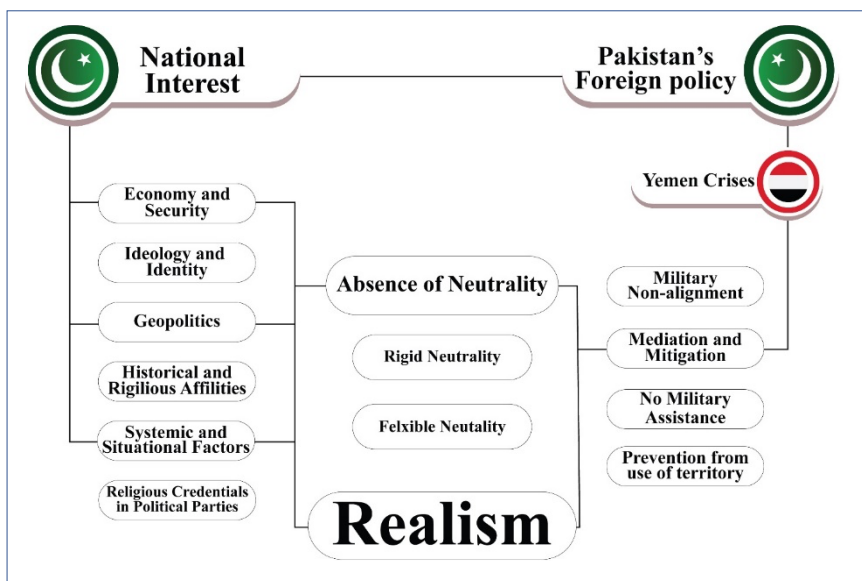


Figure 1

### Pakistan's Position Towards Yemen Crises

The above figure 5.1 indicates Pakistan's position towards Saudi- Iran rivalry in Yemen. Due to multiple factors, Pakistan is unable to manage its neutral position and has failed to keep itself away from the Saudi-Iran conflicts in Yemen. The indicators of neutrality such as non-participation of neutral state in any military alliance against any belligerent, neutral state may not augment the war-making capacity of any belligerent by keeping itself away from the conflict, refusal to provide any military assistance to any belligerent, and obligation to prevent belligerent use of neutral's

territory to transport troops have not been appeared in Pakistan's behavior towards Saudi-Iran Iran rivalry in Yemen crises.

Admittedly, the case study of the Yemen crisis detailing Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Middle East does not reflect any apparent expression of neutrality. In Particular, Pakistan's desire to mediate and mitigate the sources of tensions between Saudi Arabia and Yemen may express the second indicator of neutrality. According to Figure 5.1, Pakistan has managed to follow only one indicator of neutrality, and that is the mediation and mitigation between the two



rivals. Otherwise, the absence of other indicators of neutrality in Pakistan's behavior may express Pakistan's military and technical support to Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Resultantly, Pakistan has violated all other indicators of neutrality, as mentioned above. Additionally, Pakistan's willingness to participate in the Islamic Military Alliance may be evidence that Pakistan's foreign policy is being influenced by the desire to protect Saudi's interest in Yemen Crises. Pakistan's inclusion in Saudi-led Military Alliance with 5000 military personnel is the violation of the first indicator of neutrality- non-participation in military alliance or military non-alignment. Furthermore, Pakistan provided direct military assistance to Saudi Arabia during the fight between Saudis and Houthis along the Yemeni-Saudi border in the Southwestern region of the Arabian Peninsula. In particular, the geopolitical circumstances, ideological factors, economic needs, and systemic and situational environment may be the key drivers behind the absence of neutrality in the Yemen crisis.

### **Discussion**

The above analysis signifies a realist assessment of Pakistan's foreign policy towards the rivalry of Saudi- Arabia and Iran in Yemen. As, realism contend that, rather than being motivated by ideology and identity, Pakistan's foreign policy behavior towards Saudi-Iran rivalry in the Middle

East is driven by rational decisions based on the balance of power intentions. Furthermore, realist' expectations have appeared in Pakistan's foreign policy because Pakistan has been pursued its national interests in the Middle East. Pakistan's relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran matches Realist prepositions. Pakistan has been willing to collaborate with Saudi Arabia at the large part in Yemen, because of the substantial economic aid provided by Saudi Arabia. The most significant reason behind Pakistan's positions in Yemen is the presence of a huge number of Pakistani migrants in the Middle east and their portion in the total remittance sent to Pakistan annually. Pakistan's motivations in maximizing its economy and strengthening the armed services justify Pakistan's engagements with Saudi Arabia and Iran in different conflicting parts of the Middle East, especially in Yemen. Sometimes Pakistan's relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran deteriorate over its attempt to create a balance between these rivals. Pakistani governments have keenly been interested in gaining and maintaining its support from Pakistani populations regarding the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran in different parts of the Middle East. Unlike Iran, Pakistan has never been confronted with any threat from Saudi Arabia due to its geographic distance. Additionally, the geographic distance between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia elucidates Pakistan's willingness to support Saudi Arabia militarily against the threats of Houthis in Yemen.

## References

- Aazim, M. (2017, August 21). *Remittances: Heavy Reliance on GCC Nations is Imprudent*. Dawn. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1352855>
- ACLED. (2018). *Press Release: Yemen War Death Toll now Exceeds 60,000 according to latest ACLED Data. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)*. <https://www.acleddata.com/2018/12/11/press-release-yemen-war-death-toll-now-exceeds-60000-according-to-latest-acled-data/>
- AFP. (2018, July 31). *UN panel finds further evidence of Iran link to Yemen missiles*. Agence France-Presse: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/un-panel-finds-further-evidence-of-iran-link-to-yemen-missiles-1.755610>
- Dawn. (2016). *PM may define role in Saudi-led military alliance*. Islamabad: Dawn Publishers. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1244519>
- Dilawar, I. (2017, March 3). *Pakistan Looks to Aviation in Ambitious Defense Export Push*. Bloomberg.
- Employment, B. o. (2017). *Analysis of Manpower Export. Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment*. <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/yearly-reports/2018/2018-full.pdf>
- Fromkin, D. (1989). *A Peace to End All Peace*. New York: Avon Books.
- Gartner, E. R. (2001). *Small States and Alliances*. Heidelberg, Germany: Springer-Verlag Berlin and Heidelberg GmbH & Co. KG. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-662-13000-1>
- Gaub, F. (2016). *Saudi Arabia and the Islamic alliance*. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06883?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06883?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)
- Hill, C. (2016). *Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century*. London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hupe, R. S. (1954). *International Relations in the Age of the Conflict between Democracy and Dictatorship*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.
- Ishtiaq, M. (2017, December 12). *Saudi Arabia, Pakistan discuss defense cooperation*. Arab News. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1207971/saudi-arabia>
- Jenkins, B. M. (2016). *A Saudi -Led Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism: Welcome Muscle in the Fight Against Terrorism, Desert Mirage, or Bad Idea?* RAND Corporation.
- Karlin, C. C. (2012, June 10). *The Pak-Saudi Nuke, and How to Stop It*. The American Interest, 07(06). <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2012/06/10/the-pak-saudi-nuke-and-how-to-stop-it/>
- Kashif, M. (2016, January 27). *Pakistan's Mediation Efforts in Saudi-Iranian Tensions*. Strategic Studies, 1-3. <http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Final-Issue-brief-kashif-dated-27-1-2016.pdf>
- Khan, M. (2015). *Parliament watch: summary of the debates in the joint session on Yemen crisis*. Conflict and Peace Studies, 7-16.
- Khan, M. U. H. (2012). *Pakistan Saudi Arabia Bilateral Relations: A Research Study*,”. Defence Journal, 77.
- Latif, A. (2018, February 19). *10,000 Saudi soldiers being trained in Pakistan*. Anadolu Agency. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/10-000-saudi-soldiers-being-trained-in-pakistan/1067750>
- Massie, R. K. (1991). *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War*. New York: Random House.
- Mir, N. A. (2018, October 24). *Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Relations – the drivers and challenges*. <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/pakistan-saudi-arabia-relations-namir-241018>
- Monitor, M. E. (2014, September 27). *Sanaa is the fourth Arab capital to join the Iranian revolution*. www.middleeastmonitor.com: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20140927-sanaa-is-the-fourth-arab-capital-to-join-the-iranian-revolution/>
- Obaid, N. (2015, June 29). *Saudi Arabia is preparing itself in case Iran develops nuclear*

- weapons. Telegraph News. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/politics-blog/11705381/Nawaf-Obaid-Saudi-Arabia-is-preparing-itself-in-case-Iran-develops-nuclear-weapons.html>
- Panda, A. (2015, April 28). *Pakistan's Neutrality in the Yemen Crisis: Brought to You by China*. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/04/pakistan-neutrality-in-the-yemen-crisis-brought-to-you-by-china/>
- Rana, M. A. (2015, March 31). *Yemen conflict: Neutrality no longer an option for Pakistan?* Dawn. Retrieved <https://www.dawn.com/news/1173023>
- Riedel, B. (2008, January 28). *Saudi Arabia: Nervously Watching Pakistan*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/saudi-arabia-nervously-watching-pakistan/>
- Saleem, F. (2017, April 28). *The Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism: Implications for Pakistan's Security and Foreign Relations*. Institute of South Asian Studies.
- Salisbury, P. (2014, October 16). *Saudi Arabia's Odd-Couple Relationship with Yemen*. Bloomberg Businessweek.
- Salisbury, P. (2014, February 13). *West grows wary of Yemen's Houthis as Shia group's profile increases*. <https://www.ft.com/content/5cd5950a-9004-11e3-ae9-00144feab7de>
- Salisbury, P. (2015). *Yemen and the Saudi-Iranian Cold War*. The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 3-8.
- Sharp, J. M. (2019). *Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention*. Congressional Research Service. Congressional Research Service. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/>
- Sirgany, S. E. (2019, February 10). *Saudi-led coalition denies supplying Houthis, al Qaeda-linked fighters with US weapons in Yemen*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/09/middleeast/saudi-coalition-yemen-houthis-intl/index.html>
- Smith, L. M. E. (2016, February 15). *Saudi Arabia launches 'North Thunder' military drill with troops from 20 nations*. Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-launches-north-thunder-military-drill-with-troops-from-20-nations-a6874771.html>
- Syed, B. S. (2017, April 22). *Raheel leaves for Riyadh to command military alliance*. Dawn News. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1328531>
- Times, K. (2015, April 12). *UAE condemns Pakistan's vote on Yemen*. Khaleej Times. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/general/uae-condemns-pakistan-s-vote-on-yemen>
- Unhcr. (2019). *Unhcr operational update*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Yemen%20EXTERNAL%20Operational%20Update%205%20July%202019.pdf>
- Usaid. (2019). *Food assistance fact sheet - yemen*. Usaid <https://www.usaid.gov/yemen/food-assistance>
- Yousaf, K. (2014, May 7). *Striking the balance: PM assuages concerns on Middle East policy*. The Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/705168/strking-the-balance-pm-assuages-concerns-on-middle-east-policy/>