
STRATEGIC TENSIONS AND GEOPOLITICAL NECESSITY: PROSPECTS FOR SECURITIZATION OF IRAN-PAKISTAN RELATIONS IN THE GLOBALIZATION CONTEXT

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Iran's and Pakistan's foreign policies towards each other are established in a security structure, and both sides have adopted securitized foreign policies towards each other. The most crucial factor contributing to the balanced relations between these two countries, despite their securitized foreign policy, is their neighborhood and geopolitical necessity. This article discusses numerous influential factors affecting the securitization of Iran-Pakistan foreign policies, including the Arab Spring, the Syrian and Yemeni crisis, Chabahar port, relations with China and India, as well as terrorism and radicalism. It is argued that both sides try to avoid conflicts and high tensions with each other due to neighborhood and geopolitical necessities.

Keywords: *Iran, Pakistan, securitized, structure, foreign policy.*

Introduction

With a revolution in the field of communication and information technology, some experts in the field of international relations emphasize the gradual decline of the importance of geography in international relations. Nevertheless, geographical proximity continues to play a key role in the relations between countries, and without considering the relations of countries with their neighbors, it is impossible to estimate their security level and national interests. Identifying each country's capabilities and vulnerabilities depends on the geographical and geopolitical conditions of that country, but as a general rule around the world, neighbors play a unique and essential role in each country's strategic policies. As two large neighbors, Pakistan and Iran, have a key influence on foreign and security policy in South and West Asia. The relationship between these two countries has gone through various hardships over the past decades. Pakistan has faced many challenges and has gone through various difficulties since its formation and recognition as an independent nation until it acquired nuclear weapons. Pakistan has gone through various internal and regional wars over the decades and years, and accordingly, international relations theorists consider Pakistan as an unstable country. The creation of several militant groups, Pakistan's continued public and private military and security support to these groups, security challenges and geopolitical problems of the subcontinent, *etc.* have made Pakistan a vulnerable country. Large population, severe economic, cultural and social problems, *etc.* made Pakistan a fragile state. Pakistan's foreign policy focuses on overcoming domestic and foreign security challenges, stabilizing national identity, and preserving its independence and territorial integrity. Paki-

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stan's foreign policy, similar to that of some other countries in South Asia and the Middle East, has become securitized. The securitized politics attempts to combat the anti-security measures of other countries. In securitized policy, the recognition of and struggle against anti-security measures is of key importance. India plays an important role in Pakistan's securitized foreign policy (Hussain 2019). Pakistan's foreign policy security efforts, to a great extent, center on countering India and according to Pakistani elites, cooperation or competition with any country depends on the type of relationship it has with India. At the end of the twentieth century, following the initiation of Pakistan's nuclear program and the increasing pressure on it, as well as India's international political and economic growth, Pakistan's foreign policy found a flexible structure (Shakeel and Naheed 2019: 28). By developing a new foreign policy framework in response to India's efforts and power expansion, Pakistan chose proximity to China. Bilateral China-Pakistan relations and alliances between China and Pakistan are now referred to as the 'Iron Brotherhood' (Shih 2018). Currently, one of the most important factors influencing Pakistan's stance towards the regional and international security system is China and its foreign orientation towards other countries (Gul and *et al.* 2021).

As a result, the present article poses the question of how and on what basis Iran-Pakistan relations have been established and oriented. In a response to this question, the present article explains that the relations between Iran and Pakistan are oriented towards each other on the basis of the two countries' securitized foreign policy framework towards each other as well as several issues between the two sides, and the most important factor in the stability of Iran-Pakistan bilateral relations is the geopolitical necessity and geographical proximity, which, as a balance weight, prevent open and radical disputes between the two sides and force them to respect each other's legitimate interests. Based on this theory, foreign policymakers on both sides have adopted a security-oriented approach rather than an economic or cultural one, and their foreign policies reflect this. Following this, regional factors and the international system, especially the two great powers of India and China, play a significant role in the views and orientations of the two sides toward each other. In this regard, the role of the international system and the superpowers, especially the United States, is of critical importance.

Pakistan, a Country Posing Security Challenges to Neighbors' Foreign Policy

According to the Copenhagen school of security studies, (Stritzel 2014: 112) Pakistan, with its fragile security and economic conditions, and its large population (as a facilitating condition), (Javed and Nabi 2018) radical groups, the military, and security organizations (functional actors and securitizing actors), nations and other countries (target audience), and gaining maximum hardware and software benefits through these factors (referent object) has always posed security threats to the foreign policy of neighboring countries (Al Ahsan 2018). This has become even more evident in the last two decades, especially after the US invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of radical Islamist groups. A crisis-prone country like Pakistan, due to its social and economic instability, as well as its unstable political structure, has posed critical and security challenges to the foreign policy of neighboring countries in today's international and hegemonic system (Curtis 2012).

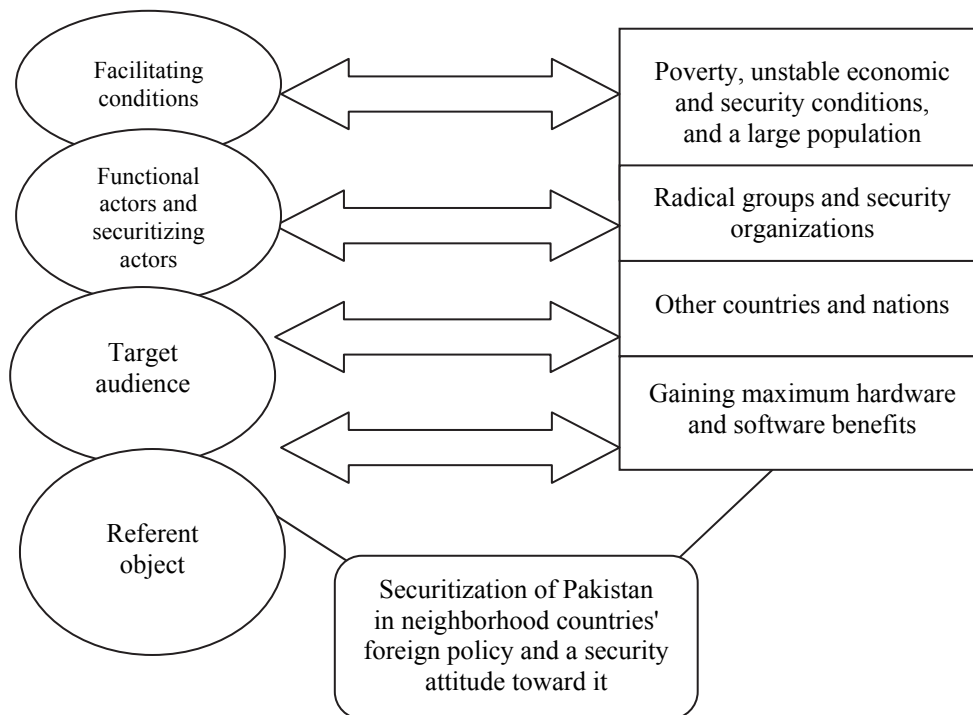


Fig. 1. Factors making Securitization of Pakistan in neighborhood countries' foreign policy

Before the Islamic Revolution, Pakistan was a non-security problem for Iran, and then it became a security problem. Iran's recognition of Pakistan, and its use as a weight against India and other regional rivals, were key factors in the Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi government's decision to recognize Pakistan as a new nation/state. At the beginning of country's establishment, Pakistan needed new allies to support the fledgling state in the face of sanctions and non-recognition by India and some other countries in the region. Accordingly, Iran was a powerful and wealthy ally of Pakistan during the Pahlavi period, and Iran's view of Pakistan was instrumental and top-down, and in the structure of Pahlavi foreign policy, Pakistan was a non-strategic and secondary concern (Beidollahkhani and Kahrazeh 2021). However, for the newly formed Pakistan, Iran was a strategic and powerful neighbor that made a significant contribution to the country's independence and stabilization (Alam 2004). Pakistan made a conclusion that Iran was a significant and strategic partner for the country due to various Pahlavi's financial and security aids, as well as assistance with the country's political and international reconstruction process. Iran also aided Pakistan in terms of military, intelligence, and logistical support during the 1971 war between Pakistan and India over the secession of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) (Vatanka 2015). At the same time, for Mohammad Reza Shah, Pakistan was a factor that could be used against Iran's regional rivals. Pakistan's secession from India, India's shrinking, changes in the geography of the region, as well as the loss of its boundary lines with India, were somewhat optimistic for Iran. Due to being on the western front of the Cold War and its blockade by the Soviets, Iran had

relieved itself of its large eastern neighbor, India, at the time, and it could exert pressure on India through Pakistan (Rizavi 2011). Furthermore, the geopolitical issue was of significant importance in Iran's recognition of Pakistan's independence (Burke and Ziring 1991). During Pakistan's independence, some key factors on the issue of Pakistan affected Pahlavi's foreign policy and convinced him to recognize Pakistan as an independent state. These factors included preventing the spread of security challenges, political crisis, and civil wars from the Indian subcontinent to Iran, as well as pressure on India due to its collaboration with the Soviet Union against countries in the region.

The Islamic Revolution and the Securitization of Iran's Foreign Policy towards Pakistan

While Pakistan maintained friendly ties with Pahlavi government until the Shah's final days in power, the Pakistani government maintained relations with Iranian revolutionaries prior to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the collapse of Pahlavi's regime. Motivated by the Islamic Revolution in Iran, General Zia-ul-Haq accelerated the Islamization of affairs in Pakistan at that time. Also, the Iranian revolution has resulted in the politicization and organization of the country's Shi'ite communities (Rieck 2015). Following the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Saudi Arabian financial aids were provided to Pakistan to accelerate the radicalization of revolutionary Islam in Pakistan, which shared borders with Iran. With the rise of the Islamabad-backed Taliban, who dominated 90 per cent of Afghanistan in the late 1990s, ties between Iran and Pakistan weakened. Attacks on Shiites in Afghanistan and Pakistan further exacerbated the situation (Mohammadi and Ahmadi 2017). In recent years, the development of radical Islam and the formation of radical groups in Pakistan have been among the factors (as functional and securitizing actors) that have led to securitized Pakistan-Iran relations. The killing of Iranian diplomats at the Mazar-e-Sharif consulate in Afghanistan by the Sahaba Group (terrorist group in Pakistan linked to Pakistan's intelligence and security services) in 1998 heightened tensions, putting the two countries on the verge of direct military conflict. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, some groups backed by Saudi Arabia in Pakistan reached their peak power, targeting large numbers of Shiite mosques and prominent figures. During this time, the Iranian consulate in Peshawar was twice targeted, and in 2009, a senior Iranian diplomat was kidnapped. Thus, the Islamic Republic harshly criticized the groups financially supported by Saudi Arabia and blamed the Pakistani government for failure to save Iranian diplomats' lives and prevent Shiite killings (Vaezi 2011). Generally, Pakistan's foreign policy was tied to Saudi policy and ambitions from the 1980s until the 9/11 attacks of al-Qaeda in the United States and the ensuing 'war on terror' led by George W. Bush. The years after the Islamic Revolution, there have been ups and downs in Iran-Pakistan ties, and different factors have played a role in these relations, leading to the two adopting a securitized countries policy toward each other.

1. Arab Spring and Iran-Pakistan Ties

Iran and Pakistan were indirectly forced to be on two different fronts as a result of the Arab Spring. In the face of the Arab Spring, Sunni Pakistan, pursued the strategies of several Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Pakistan, because of its large population, has been one of the countries that have mobilized several individuals

logistically and collectively to suppress or join radical Sunni groups in war-torn Arab countries (Guzansky 2016). Concerning the Arab Spring, Pakistan, like other neighboring countries, initially reacted gently and peacefully to events in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries. Fear of the effect of these events on Pakistan's social movements, as well as its lack of social, political, and economic stability, prompted a cautious response from this country and caused its reluctance to have a strong effect on the developments in Arab countries (Soherwordi and Anum 2011; Aras and Ekim 2015). Thus, in the early stages of these developments, the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs and many religious groups officially supported uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and some other countries but then did not demonstrate direct intervention in these countries' upheavals at later times. Even, media coverage was weak for fear that movements would be transferred into the country, which was highly sectarian (Aras and Ekim 2015).

2. Syria and Yemen and Iran-Pakistan Ties

With the beginning of the developments in Syria and the complication of the Yemen crisis, Pakistan's reaction and orientation towards these issues changed, adopting a different orientation from that of Iran, and what happened in Bahrain made this difference more apparent (Mishra 2017). Based on the Islamic Republic views, Pakistan has backed the Saudi-led war against Bahrain's Shiites. In addition, the Syrian war has highlighted the conflicts between Pakistan and Iran. Iran considered Pakistan to be backed by Riyadh in training and arming opposition groups to Bashar al-Assad. Pakistan, on the other hand, harshly criticized Iran for organizing, recruiting, and arming the Fatemiyoun and Zainabiyoun divisions of Afghans and Pakistani Shiites to fight in Syria (Majidiyar 2017). For Pakistan and some extremist groups in this country, Iran's presence and military intervention in Syria was regarded as Shiite rulers' desire to expand their territorial control and provoke sectarian conflict, which is seen as a fight against Sunnis (Nadimi 2016).

Although the positions of the Pakistani government changed a little after the victories of Bashar Assad. The official position of Pakistan was that it is against any attempt to topple the government of Syrian President Bashar al Assad. In December 2015, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Aizaz Chaudhry announced that, 'Pakistan supports all efforts employed at facilitating a peaceful Syrian-led and inclusive solution that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people through a comprehensive political dialogue.' It is pertinent to mention that since the start of the Syrian conflict, Pakistan had maintained a policy of strict neutrality. The statement from the foreign secretary marked a significant shift in Pakistan's policy on the ongoing Syrian crisis (Haider 2015).

The escalation of Syria's Shiite-Sunni sectarian conflict compelled Pakistan's radical groups and mercenaries to send troops to Syria (Ramani 2016). A number of factors provoked some Pakistanis to fight in Syria, including the instigation of the Shiite-Sunni war, the sectarianization of the Syrian conflict by Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Pakistan's adherence to religious policies of Saudi Arabia, and the increasing impact of rich Arab countries on Pakistan.

Furthermore, one of the problems that have caused Pakistan to have a minor dispute with Iran was the existing situation in Yemen. After invading Yemen, Saudi Arabia asked Pakistan to aid her in pursuing its goals by sending troops and providing logisti-

cal support for its invasion. This request prompted Nawaz Sharif's (Pakistani Prime Minister at that time) hasty and unequivocal response, which benefited Saudi Arabia. Nawaz Sharif expressed his support for Saudi Arabia under any circumstances. These remarks, which revealed his opinion and stance on this issue, were problematic for Pakistan because Pakistanis were reluctant to back Saudi Arabia in its violence. Finally, Nawaz Sharif recognized his mistake in taking a hasty hard-line attitude and left the decision to parliament, saying he would accept whatever the parliament decided. The parliament also advised against the Pakistani government taking part in the violence while also stating that it would back up Saudi citizens. In April 2015, the Pakistani parliament and senate passed a resolution urging the government to support Saudi territorial integrity and sovereignty while avoiding military action in an Islamic region, a resolution that displeased Riyadh and other Arab countries. Despite a parliamentary resolution and a proclamation of positive neutrality on the Yemeni crisis, Pakistan's government released a statement supporting Saudi Arabia and the military coalition occupying Yemen, as well as backing Mansour Hadi and opposing Houthi movements. Pakistan's neutrality was primarily motivated by its fear of crisis and sectarian conflict spreading throughout the country. Pakistan's Shiite minority, as well as the country's Sunnis, was waiting for a trigger to restart the sectarian conflict in this populated country, which had unstable economic and political systems. A further regional and international factor contributing to this issue was the diplomatic consultations of Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, during his visit to Pakistan (Riedel 2015). Furthermore, rising domestic pressure from Pakistani civil society and religious leaders pressured the government to vote against acting in favor of Saudi Arabia and entering the Yemeni conflict. This displeased Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and the UAE Foreign Minister announced at a press conference that the country would reduce its financial assistance to Pakistan to exert pressure on the country (DAWN 2015). Pakistan, on the other hand, later tried to please Saudi Arabia by joining a Saudi-led 'Muslim NATO' alliance of Islamic countries. Thus, Pakistan allowed former Pakistan Army Chief of Staff General Raheel Sharif's appointment as commander of Muslim NATO (Boone 2017). Sharif's joining this coalition could challenge Pakistan's balancing role in the Iran-Saudi Arabia conflict. The Pakistani government, however, declared that it would accept the coalition's leadership if it is not anti-Iranian and has even requested to play a diplomatic role in easing tensions between Riyadh and Tehran (News Desk 2017). The visit of the Commander of the Pakistan Army on November 6, 2017, to Iran, General Qamar Javid Bajwa, had some implications in this regard. Before he visited Iran, he had met the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan three times within six months and even suggested Iran to join the above coalition (IRNA 2017). Considering the influence of the Pakistani military on its foreign policy, especially in its relations with Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, the United States, as well as India, General Qamar Javid's visit to Tehran could be a crucial point in Pakistan-Iran relations. Pakistan did not want to isolate Iran and cool down its relations with this country. Considering Pakistan's demographic and religious composition as well as the country's domestic policies, this could have disastrous consequences. In general, due to strained relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the degree of Pakistan's involvement in the Muslim NATO alliance, establishing a balance and meeting both Iran's and Riyadh's satisfaction would be difficult for Islamabad. Currently, given these challenges, establishing a balance be-

tween Iran and Saudi Arabia is very difficult for Pakistan. However, regarding Pakistan's public attitudes, radical religious and political parties, and reliance on Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for assistance, it must be acknowledged that Pakistan's army and political system have always indicated orientation toward Saudi Arabia, and this challenges its ties with Iran and securitizes the Pakistan-Iran relations.

3. Dilemma of Chabahar-Gwadar Ports: China-India and Iran-Pakistan

A further challenge in Pakistan-Iran relations relates to Chabahar and Gwadar Ports as well as the two countries' ties with China and India. Based on Pakistan's foreign and domestic policy and considering this country's national identity, the most critical factor affecting its policies and decision-making is opposition to India, and the port of Gwadar has brought China, India's rival, in agreement with India's rival and opponent, Pakistan (Hassan 2017; Alam Rizvi 2011). Relations between China and Pakistan are regarded to be strategic and ironic, and this is acknowledged by the majority of experts in the field of international relations. India has played a key role in boosting the ties between these countries (Hameed 2017). As a result of its strategic and geopolitical vulnerability, India has made efforts in developing the port of Chabahar in order to bypass Pakistan and gain access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, as well as compete with its neighbor and rival, China. The presence of India near the port of Gwadar is likely to pose a significant security threat to Pakistan and may cause Pakistan's most plans against India to fail (Shirmohammadi and Rahn 2017). Thus, Pakistan is displeased with the growing proximity between Iran and India and the establishment of transport routes to Central Asia and Afghanistan via Chabahar, a rival to Pakistan's Gwadar port (Soltaninejad 2017). In spite of the signing of the UN Security Council Resolution by Iran in 1394 (July 14, 2015) and the agreement with world powers, as well as the exemption of the port of Chabahar from heavy sanctions imposed on Iran by Trump, India has not yet managed to fully exploit Chabahar's capacity, and this has been very satisfying for Pakistan. Unlike India, Iran-Pakistan relations have been expanded since the Comprehensive Joint Action Plan (CJAP), and China has had a crucial role in boosting Iran-Pakistan and cooling off Iran-India relations (Pande 2016).

Due to international challenges with the West, led by the United States, Iran is unable to fully exploit the port of Chabahar, and this benefits Pakistan and China. As a result, Iran has required China several times to assist in developing the Chabahar port, and China has somewhat agreed. However, because of India's presence in the port and the strategic relationship between Pakistan and China, as well as Pakistan's pressure, Chinese companies have yet declined to fully participate in the Chabahar port development project (Chaziza 2016). In general, India's strong presence in Chabahar is undesirable for Pakistan, and both Pakistan and China are working hard to prevent it, and this is a factor that contributes to challenging Iran-Pakistan relationships. As yet, Pakistan has refused to allow Iran and Iranian companies to participate in the development of the Gwadar port. Furthermore, the Chabahar port development project has been stalled due to extensive Iran-China relations and India's decline to fully participate in Chabahar development as a result of the US pressure and Western sanctions against Iran (Singh S. and Singh R. 2019). In a nutshell, the rivalry between the two ports and its connection to the broader strategic rivalries between China and India in Asia has blurred the ties between Iran and Pakistan on political and economic grounds.

Furthermore, what complicates Iran-China relations and hence Iran-Pakistan ties, even more, is that, while accepting Pakistan and India's membership in 2017, China occasionally opposes Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) due to sanctions and Iran's challenges with the USA. The acceptance of Pakistan and India in the SCO at a summit in Astana, Kazakhstan (Michel 2017) on June 9, 2017, and refusing Iran's membership is likely to obscure future Iran-Pakistan and Iran-India ties. Before India and Pakistan join the SCO (Norling and Swanstrom 2007), it was easier to convince the other members to allow Iran's joining. However, Iran's challenges with the West, as well as China's and some other members' opposition, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, made it difficult for Iran to join later. Since this organization has expanded its membership to eight states when India and Pakistan joined the SCO as full members, it has become more difficult for Iran to join this alliance because, in addition to earlier members, Iran should satisfy India and Pakistan, which would be a challenging task (Kaleji 2020).

Despite the opposition of some member states, in recent years, Russia's support has accelerated the processes of Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In September 2021, Russian authorities, including President Putin, announced that Russia supports the start of Iran's Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) membership process (TASS 2021). Russia, as one of the energy powers, can increase the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in global order in alliance with Iran (Aleshkovski and Mishchenko 2017). Iran has one of the largest oil and gas energy reserves in the world.

As a result, any changes in India-Iran and China-Pakistan relations, whether positive or negative, would have an effect on Iran-Pakistan relations. This is particularly true in the case of Iran-India relations. Iran and China have developed extensive relations in the political and economic fields, and there is no problem between Iran and Pakistan in this regard, because Pakistan is also a strategic partner of China, and Iran and Pakistan have a lot of cooperation with China (Ali 2020). The key problem is Iran's relationship with India, which is likely to affect both Pakistan-Iran and China-Iran ties (Purushothaman 2012). Iran's orientation, proximity to or distance from India, have a clear short-term and long-term impact on Iran's ties with Pakistan and China.

4. Terrorism-Radicalism and Iran-Pakistan Ties

Terrorism and extremist Islamist groups are two problems that have strained Iran-Pakistan ties in recent years. The two countries' neighborhood with Afghanistan as well as Pakistan's security and military ties with radical groups active on its borders with Afghanistan and Iran occasionally hinder Iran-Pakistan relations. Another problem between the two countries is related to Balochistan, where drug smuggling and the activities of Baloch armed militant groups have reduced security on the borders of both countries. During the last two years, Iranian and Pakistani security forces and border guards have regularly fired mortar shell attacks or shootings at targets on each other's territory, which has been unprecedented in the 68-year-old diplomatic relationship between the two countries. In one case, Commander of Army's Ground Force Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan said 'If no serious action is taken by the Pakistani government, Iran would reserve an inalienable right to overwhelm and destroy nests of bandits and terrorists at any depth of the neighboring country's territory' (Purdestan 2017). These remarks provoked a sharp protest from Pakistan, and the Pakistani Foreign Ministry sum-

moned Iran's ambassador to Islamabad and lodged a strong protest (Farooq Khan 2017). Furthermore, the Pakistani military considered the killing of Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour in 2016 (June 1, 2016) near the Iranian border to be committed by Iran. He was killed by a military drone strike a short time after his passing of Iran's borders to enter Pakistan. Pakistan's perception is that, in this regard, Iran has cooperated with the United States to attribute the killing of the Taliban leader to Pakistan (Arin 2017). Hence, in most cases, the analytical approach adopted by both countries to manage terrorist events and deal with radical groups, as well as the problem of Balochistan, has had a security-military nature (Dudoignon 2017). Furthermore, Afghanistan plays a critical security role in establishing ties between Iran and Pakistan. Afghanistan's role in boosting Pakistan-Iran ties is important because it shares many cultural, ethnic, and religious similarities with both Iran and Pakistan. Afghanistan lies at the heart of Pakistan's geopolitical influence, and if it develops relations with Islamabad, it can contribute to a relative balance of power between two competing countries, Pakistan and India, in South Asia (Mohammad Khan 2011). As a result, no country, including Iran, should be allowed to expand its influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan wishes to strengthen its role in Central Asian affairs through Afghanistan. Pakistan aims to strengthen ties with Central Asia to expand its political and economic influence in the region while Iran aims to ensure its stability and end its isolation. Accordingly, Iran's ideological rival (Saudi Arabia) together with Pakistan seeks an agreed-upon unified policy toward Afghanistan to restrict Iran's strength. Iran, India (Pakistan's rival), and Russia pursue similar policies in Afghanistan (Zahirinejad 2013) yet, India's rather close ties with Israel and the United States have not resulted in much of a schism between Iran and India (Singh 2021). Thus, as can be observed, the issue of radicalism and terrorism, as well as the contribution of Afghanistan to Iran-Pakistan relations, have posed a threat to Iran-Pakistan relations at times and resulted in securitized relations.

Securitized Foreign Policy and Geopolitical Necessity in Iran-Pakistan Relations

As mentioned earlier, Iran-Pakistan challenges resulted in the two countries' ties and foreign policy to become securitized. Since the Islamic Revolution, ties between Iran and Pakistan have become securitized. After the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, Pakistan has been one of the best sites for Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, to invest and take measures against the Islamic Revolution. Furthermore, Pakistan has posed a threat to Iran-Pakistan relations due to its geographical proximity to Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province, the cultural similarities between the two countries' Baluchi population, strengthening of Sunni religious groups in Iran, and the development of militant groups in Iran's borders and their religious and operational training in their territory (Beidollahkhani 2022). Meanwhile, various regional and international factors affect cross-country ties. The Iran-US challenge indirectly benefits Pakistan (Roy 2009). Also, the relations of Iran and Pakistan with Arab countries surrounding the Persian Gulf directly and/or indirectly affect Iran-Pakistan relations. Iran's low level of trade and economic relations with Pakistan reflects this. Charging high custom duty for Iranian products exported to Pakistan and the low rate of Iran's non-oil exports to Pakistan are among the factors that reflect the two countries' adopting securitized foreign policies. Despite the positive attitudes of Shiites and some other Pakistani Islamist groups toward Iran's nuclear program and numerous documents suggesting the Pakistanis' covert aid to Iran's nuclear program at various times,

Pakistani nationalist elites have skeptical views about it because, as a Shiite Muslim country, Iran's access to a nuclear weapon may pose a threat to Pakistan's nuclear power. Despite some factors resulting in occasional competition and challenge, geopolitical proximity and shared boundaries are the most important factors that have maintained ties between the two countries at a peaceful level and serve as a balance weight in the current relations between the two countries (Belal 2017). The geopolitical issue has caused the two countries to balance their bilateral ties despite adopting a securitized perspective toward each other. It serves as a balance weight in developing stable and conflict-free Iran-Pakistan relations. The following figure shows this process.

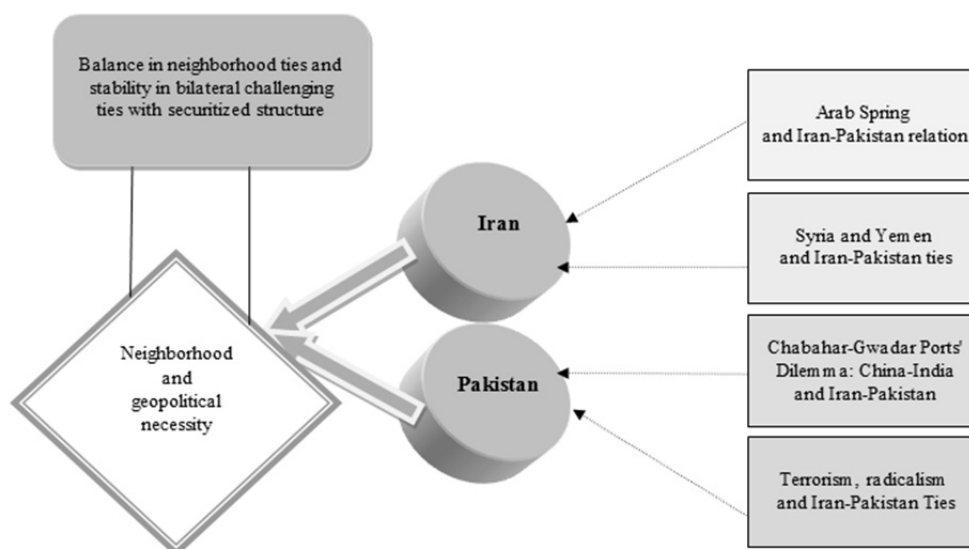


Fig. 2. Geopolitical balance in Iran-Pakistan relations

Regional and Global Dimensions of Iran-Pakistan Relations

Iran and Pakistan are considered important countries due to their different positions in the international system. Iran, as one of the important countries of the Middle East and as a regional power, plays an important role in the equations of Asia. Iran is one of the main owners of abundant energy resources in the international system and plays an important role in the energy security in the world. Despite the failed state ruling in Pakistan, this country plays an important role in the regional order arrangements of South Asia and the subcontinent. As a holder of nuclear weapons, Pakistan has always been an important element in determining regional and global security in Asia. Developments in the relations between these two countries can affect the regional and global order. Each of them has strategic relationships with superpowers including China and Russia. Iran is Russia's strategic and security partner in regional and international interactions, and Pakistan has extensive strategic relations with China.

Afghanistan is one of the other areas that can cause differences or convergence between Iran and Pakistan in the global context. Both countries have long borders with Afghanistan and today it is no secret that Pakistan is one of the main groups supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan. The re-emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan after the

US withdrawal would not have happened without Pakistan's support. Currently, recognition of the Taliban and how to deal with them is one of the important issues between Iran and Pakistan that can affect regional security and global peace. From the beginning, Pakistan has been trying to lobby at regional and international levels for global recognition of the Taliban, and because of that, this country increase its support for the Taliban. Meanwhile, Iran has a conservative position in accepting the Taliban and has not yet officially accepted the Taliban. However, due to the long borders and the presence of many Afghan immigrants, and the extensive communication between these two countries, Iran has not cut off its political relationship with the Taliban.

Besides, Pakistan's security is very fragile and Pakistan is involved in various crises due to weak biological foundations, high population crisis, and absolute poverty. This issue has caused the growth and expansion of Islamic fundamentalist groups (Vasiliev 2022). That is why Pakistan is one of the safe havens for global Islamic terrorism in the world and the place where extremist groups could grow easily. Terrorism is the manifestation of negative impacts of globalization on the security or stability of nation-states. Though the world had witnessed terrorism prior to the propagation of globalization in the 1990s, the destructive capacities of terrorists through the spread of radical ideologies and free movements of people, as well as the access to destructive weapons have been enhanced by the existence of globalization (Taiwo 2017: 32). These reasons have caused the emergence of terrorism as a regional and global phenomenon. Therefore, the spread of Islamic terrorism in Pakistan is a global phenomenon that can seriously threaten the region's security and neighboring countries. Considering that Pakistan has nuclear weapons, any development that leads to the collapse of the government is important for its neighbors and international powers, including Russia and the United States. The access of radical Islamist groups to nuclear weapons will be a nightmare for world order and world security. Any change in the relationship between the Pakistani government and radical Islamist groups can affect global order and security.

Shia and Sunni relations in Pakistan can also find regional and global dimensions. Although the persisting Sunni-Shia sectarian violence in Pakistan is not exclusively linked to external factors, it has implications for the country's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as other Muslim countries. Experts believe that balanced Pakistani relations with the two countries are imperative to improve sectarian harmony in the country. The continued terrorist attacks by Sunni sectarian militant groups, mainly Lashkar-e-Jhagvi, on the Shia community in Pakistan 'resonate negatively in Iran and are viewed as an indicator of a proxy war being carried out in the region' (Aftab 2014). Iran is also concerned about Iranian Jundullah's Baloch group and other radical terrorist groups which are active on Iran's border with Pakistan. Iran believes that these groups are supported by radicals in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also supports them. Pakistan has also deliberately turned a blind eye to the presence of these groups in its border and tribal areas and uses these groups to pressure Iran.

Pakistan has also cooperated closely with the United States and Saudi Arabia against Iran and has supported the sanctions against Iran. Saudi Arabia tried to take advantage of its authority in the Arab and Muslim world and to try to counter the rising Iranian influence (Khatib 2021). Severe sanctions against Iran and Saudi aid to Pakistan have caused this country to accompany some of Riyadh's anti-Iranian actions.

These factors are the negative aspects of the relations between these two countries in the regional and global context, which can be controlled to some extent.

The political and security dimensions of Iran-Pakistan relations are more important than the economic dimensions because the volume of economic relations between these two countries is low. In the era of political globalization, political and security alliances are more important than economic alliances (Ilyin and Leonova 2022). Stabilization of Iran-Pakistan relations can lead the geopolitics of the Middle East and South Asia to the peace process. The role of international organizations can also be effective in expanding cultural and political ties between these two regional powers.

In the globalization context, challenges between different countries can quickly become global. Iran-Pakistan relations can have a wide impact on the regional challenges of South Asia as well as the Middle East region. Afghanistan is one of the important challenges between the two countries and it can affect global order and security, and the connection and convergence of Pakistan and Iran in Afghanistan could increase global peace and security. In addition, the convergence of Iran and Pakistan in the fight against radical Islamic terrorism can increase the security of the region and the world. The differences between these two countries regarding sectarian issues and terrorism cause irreparable damage to the region's security and the world. Finally, stability in the relations between these two countries can contribute to peace and security, especially in energy sectors in the Middle East. Russia and China can act as positive mediators between these two countries and expand regional peace and security due to their influence and positive and extensive relations with Iran and Pakistan.

Conclusion

The present article lists the threats and concerns that Iran and Pakistan face, explores their bilateral securitized foreign policy, discusses their security ties, and criticizes the issues and problems affecting the two countries' occasional tense relationship. Despite the current problems, which could continue to pose significant obstacles for ties between the two countries in the future, Iran-Pakistan relations will continue to be ongoing and conflict-free, due to their geopolitical neighborhood and the two countries' needs. During the Trump era, despite both countries' efforts to maintain a minimum level of tension, Iran-Pakistan political and economic ties were weakened. Furthermore, issues related to terrorism and the presence of fundamentalist Baloch groups on Pakistani soil in 2019 and 2020 have sparked challenges and tensions. Moreover, Pakistan suspects Indian companies and nationals operating in the Chabahar port of spying for Indian security services and repeatedly warned Iran about them. Due to the lack of a stable regional environment and poor cross-country economic relations, the two countries' neighborhood, as a geopolitical factor, serves as a balance weight, stabilizing the relations. Besides, as mentioned earlier, some factors may affect Iran-Pakistan relations in the future, including Pakistan's relations with the Arab states surrounding the Persian Gulf, Iran-India and Pakistan-China relations, and the future orientation of Iran's foreign policy towards the West, particularly the United States. An increase or decrease in each of these factors or any changes in the foreign policy of either Iran or Pakistan results in strengthening or weakening the ties between the two countries and hence affects the regional equations. Neither Iran nor Pakistan can neglect each other in regional equations, and this fact highlights the importance of dialogue in the equations of the two

countries. Establishing a dialogue between the two countries causes both sides to recognize each other's legitimate interests in the region in the near future, despite cross-country regional conflicts and challenges.

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