

US-IRAN WAR: ROLE OF PAKISTANI LEADERSHIP AND DIPLOMACY IN PROMOTING GLOBAL PEACE

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ABSTRACT

Rising geopolitical tensions between the U.S. and Iran threaten both regional and global stability and require the implementation of diplomacy. This paper evaluates the probable and actual functions of Pakistani leadership and diplomacy in the preservation of global peace in relation to the changes in the U.S. and Iran conflict. As a Muslim country that possesses nuclear power, few countries are better peacemakers than Pakistan when it comes to transformations. Taking into consideration its geographic positioning, its historical ties to both D.C. and Tehran, and its nuclear capabilities, Pakistan stands capable of facilitating dialogues and mitigating the chances of escalation. This paper details the willingness of Pakistani diplomacy, including behind-the-scenes diplomacy, and how it will help in achieving the goal of mitigation. It also looks at the reservations of tertiary diplomacy that Pakistan employs, such as intrepid economics and the lack of regional geostrategic interest. The study posits that the potential of Pakistan's diplomacy improves its standing in status terms and helps in the creation of new avenues in the Middle East. In the end, the study identifies the practice of diplomacy as the main ingredient in the potential avoidance of the next world war and where Pakistan stands in the world order of peace.

Keywords: US-Iran conflict, Pakistan diplomacy, global peace, mediation, international relations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many conflicts define interstate rivalries. Here, however, lies perhaps the longest and most difficult case: the United States-Iran conflict. There are many ways to define the Iran-U.S. conflict, whether through the lens of proxies and alliances or the ideological, militaristic, economic, cyber, and diplomatic aspects. Neither of the two states has relied solely on Western military powers, such as the United Nations, to engage in war. Instead, they utilize the global market and other diplomatic means to target the economically weaker state. During the Cold War, it was perhaps

one of the most dangerous. The various wars which have occurred since the Cold War came to a close have had repercussions for all, both the participants and the passive onlookers. The wars continue to wreak havoc on the economy and security of the world. It is in such circumstances that the importance of peace and intermediary states is more valid. Especially where Pakistan is concerned, one is faced with an absolute diplomatic necessity. This research is concerned with the pathways of peace through Pakistani leadership and diplomacy and its involvement in

attempting to bridge the gap between two rival powers, beyond intra- and inter-geopolitical regional stability.

1.1. Background of the Study

The deterioration of diplomatic ties between the US and Iran after the 1979 Iranian Revolution forms the basis of the background of this study. Since then, the two states have been characterized by diplomatic isolation, animosity, and rising tensions. Several historical events have occurred since then, such as the US-Iran hostage crisis, US economic sanctions on Iran, Iran's nuclear program, and the Iran-proxy wars, all of which have intensified and enriched the geopolitical rivalry between the two states. In this regard, the geopolitical instability brought about by the Iran-US rivalry has made other states, especially those in the middle, important in addressing the US-Iran conflict (Ochim & Hassan, 2023). Pakistan has had a historical relationship with both Iran and the US, which places Pakistan at the center of this Iran-US conflict. Therefore, Pakistan has the opportunity to contribute to the peace-building process and the efforts of conflict de-escalation in this regard.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The focus of this study is to investigate the contribution of middle power diplomacy to the resolution of difficult global conflicts. In the existing global framework of great power rivalry, most smaller and middle states perform key functions that are frequently underappreciated. That is, they help to lower the temperature of conflicts by engaging the relevant parties in dialogue. Pakistan is in an advantageous position to provide an important case study for the consideration of peace through multiple options, given Pakistan's geographical location and the country's ties to both the U.S. and Iran (Baslamisli, 2026). This study will be of interest to policymakers, international relations and diplomacy scholars, and professionals, as it demonstrates the need for purposeful diplomacy to pursue focused, effective conflict mediation to prevent the escalation of disputes. It also demonstrates the need for a diplomatic balance to

ensure regional stability and the peace of the world.

1.3. Overview of US-Iran Conflict and Its Global Implications

As it stands, an endless multitude of shifts, changes, and numerous complexities defines today's US-Iran conflict. In a succession of events going back more than forty years, a series of actions, reactions, and responses have constructed a multifaceted and multidimensional conflict. An ideological contest, a rivalry for regional (Middle Eastern) power and hegemony, and a struggle for strategic dominance have sustained the conflict for decades. Since the end of the 20th century, the US has implemented numerous economic sanctions on Iran as a means to attempt to hasten the end of Iranian leadership (Shaheen et al., 2026). In the 2010s, Iran was a regional power asserting itself as a major player in the Middle East. In direct opposition to American power and influence in the region, Iran established alliances with regional powers and utilized proxy forces in various Middle Eastern countries to wage what has been known as the US-Iran war. An Iranian proxy in the Middle East will support the interests of Iran by opposing the US, while a proxy in the Middle East will serve to support US interests. The arms race has worried international watchdogs regarding the Iranian regime with a tenuous grip on nuclear arms. The Strait of Hormuz, as a contested region of the Middle East, has the potential to further upset an already fragile global market for fuel. The conflict beyond the region has the potential to constrain the world's economy and, in the process, peace and stability (Faheem et al., 2025).

1.4. Pakistan's Position in International Diplomacy

Thanks to its location, politics, and history, Pakistan holds a significant position in international diplomacy. It shares a border with Iran, and it has cultural, religious, and economic ties with Iran in addition to a historic alliance with the United States characterized by security and counterterrorism collaboration. With such ties, Pakistan is in a one-of-a-kind position in diplomacy, as it has the capability to mediate

between the two nations. Pakistan's participation in international organizations and its history in regional peacemaking processes strengthen its ability to improve diplomacy even further (Yaqub et al., 2025). In contrast, Pakistan's economy, politics, as well as external diplomacy affect its ability and choices. However, Pakistan remains a significant player in international and regional diplomacy, especially in peacemaking processes.

1.5. Nature of Doctrinal (Library-Based) Research

This study employs a qualitative doctrinal research method. This method makes maximum use of secondary source materials instead of first-hand information. Doctrinal research is both interpretive and analytical. It primarily revolves around the inquiry of already existing literature such as academic-level texts, articles and studies published in peer-reviewed journals, reviewed and/or published policy papers, international reports, and information from reputable search engines (Mustafa & Anupam, 2025). Doctrinal research, especially in international relations, is sought after since the comprehension of many of the propositions predominant in the international relations literature, and the debates present within the discipline, often call for a good deal of both method-focused research and historical analysis. Within that framework and approach, the researcher systematically peruses the literature, employs the available lenses of policy, and advances understanding in the space of US-Iran relations and the Pakistan diplomatic relations framework. Within this approach, the type of analysis that is emphasized is primarily conceptual, thematic, interpretative, and integrative rather than one that is concerned primarily or solely with the collection of field data (Kundi et al., 2025).

1.6. Research Objectives

- i. To assess the historical factors and ongoing US-Iran relations as one of the major international security challenges.
- ii. To evaluate Pakistan's diplomatic relations with the United States and Iran in the context of current regional geopolitics.

- iii. To analyze the possible role of the Pakistan government in supporting diplomacy and the resolution of the conflict.
- iv. To discuss barriers to the resolution of diplomatic relations to Pakistan's mediation in international relations.
- v. To develop a framework for Pakistan's engagement in the enhancement of global peace through possible diplomatic and multilateral initiatives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Frameworks (Realism, Liberalism, Peace Theory)

The analysis of this study is grounded in three core theories of international relations, namely Realism, Liberalism, and Peace Theory, and their associated frameworks that can be employed in the US-Iran conflict and the possible diplomatic intervention of Pakistan. Given that Realism is the precursor and foremost school of international relations, its interpretation of the US-Iran conflict is one of boundless strategic rivalry, where each of the states attempts to enhance its geopolitical foothold in the Middle East. Here, the US aims to consolidate advantage over its regional antagonists, especially regarding nuclear weapons proliferation to adversarial countries. In contrast, Iran is driven toward the same regional advantage as the US through the utilization of its nuclear capability, coalitions, and ideological export, especially the embedding of its Islamic Revolution. Realism posits that such conflicting relationships between states are certain, given their opposing national ambitions and interests within the international system (Bukhari, 2026).

Liberalism emphasizes the value of international institutions, the role of diplomacy, and the importance of trade and mutually beneficial economic relationships in creating and maintaining peace, and focuses more on cooperation among adversaries. According to liberal philosophers, adversaries can be managed through economic partnerships, the establishment of institutions, and, most importantly, dialogue. Multilateral diplomacy and agreements exemplified by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) are believed to provide a 'cooling

effect' on tensions between opposing states and are an example of a liberal success. As a result, Liberalism legitimizes the potential of states such as Pakistan in the role of a true intermediary in direct bilateral negotiations in mediation efforts, relating to the conflict parties, and establishing a framework of communication and trust between them (Alkhafaji, 2026).

Peace Theory broadens the analysis to include the concepts of structural violence and proposes conflict transformation and nonviolent mechanisms of resolution. In contrast to Realism, which holds that conflict is inevitable, Peace Theory focuses on eliminating the root causes of conflict. These include unresolved historical grievances and tensions, exclusion and discrimination based on identity, and social and economic inequalities. Peace Theory promotes patience and long-term peace. With respect to the US-Iran case, Peace Theory suggests that, in order to achieve structural transformation toward peace, a framework that reduces narratives and social practices of suspicion and mutual distrust is essential, along with agreements. For the purposes of analysis, the three presented concepts are interrelated and are critical to understanding the persistence of a given conflict and the opportunities existing for the necessary diplomatic efforts to resolve it (Mir & Ayub, 2026).

2.2. Scholarly Discourse on US-Iran Relations

Discussions on US-Iran relations have been extensive over the years. Diplomatic relations between the US and Iran have endured ideological breakdowns and geopolitical tension. Most scholars agree that the hostility between the two began in 1979, when Iran underwent a revolution that resulted in US-Iran estrangement in the Middle East and a subsequent diplomatic break. In 1979, the US embassy in Tehran was taken hostage, and continuous hostility was forged. Since that time, there have been limited communications and a few episodes of mediation. Scholarly analysis on US-Iran relations has shifted and focused primarily on Iran's nuclear response and the international reactions led by the Americans and their allies. The fear of nuclear proliferation has influenced US foreign policy

from aggressive diplomatic stances to increasing sanctions and augmented militarization. Scholars believe that Iran has also desired to enhance its nuclear capabilities for defensive and international positioning (Shah, 2023). Engaging Iranian diplomats could easily lead to a defensive "security dilemma." However, a nuclear arms policy by the US could also result in a greater defensive "security dilemma."

Another component of the analysis discusses the usage of proxies with the US-Iran case study. Literature indicates that since the beginning of the US-Iran rivalry, conflict has occurred in a number of places, including Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon. In such places, states aid and support allied groups to control and expand their influence so that the likelihood of direct diplomatic engagement is almost impossible. Also, the literature presents the use of sanctions, a major US foreign policy instrument, and the analysis reflects on the humanitarian and economic impacts of these sanctions on Iran and whether the US has achieved its political goals through these means.

This literature identifies a negative conflict between Iran and the US; however, positive diplomatic relations, such as the signing and negotiations of the JCPOA, are acknowledged. This literature perceives the agreement as the US stepping up to lead in multilateral and international diplomacy. Literature also analyzes the impact of US domestic political cycles on the weakening of international treaties (Kazmi & Rasool, 2024). Overall, the literature suggests that the US-Iran relationship is a long-standing conflict with complex negative dynamics but also potential for complex diplomatic resolutions.

2.3. Academic Analysis of Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Scholarly works recognize that Pakistan's foreign policy is primarily a juggling act of many regional commitments, strategic partnerships, and domestic factors. Scholars point out that Pakistan's foreign policy is largely shaped by the convergence of South Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Pakistan's complicated and at times entangled bilateral partnerships with the United

States in security, counterterrorism, and economic domains make Pakistan a key regional security partner and a major player in the US-led War on Terror, especially post-9/11. Pakistan's foreign policy was complicated by the two major world powers, the United States and the USSR, during the Cold War. Today, however, Pakistan's foreign policy and bilateral partnerships continue to be viewed with a high degree of skepticism and strategic divergence (Jan et al., 2023).

Concurrently, Pakistan has retained its historical, cultural, and economic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The two countries share multiple links and bilateral relations, which are lucrative, comprehensive, and bidirectional as a result of shared borders, religious and cultural linkages, and energy cooperation and trade. Scholars believe Pakistan's attention rests on bilateral economic relations and regional security issues that demand border control, which drives Pakistan toward India. The result is the diverse and extensive influence of the USA and Iran on Pakistan's foreign policy.

Most scholars continue to study the multilateral and regional dimensions of Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan's diplomatic engagement is usually attributed to its participation in the OIC, its interests in the Afghan peace process, and its broader involvement in UN peacekeeping globally. However, the literature also highlights frustrations over structural constraints such as economic dependency, political turbulence, and the influence of great powers, which historically have impeded Pakistan from pursuing a fully independent foreign policy. Nevertheless, Pakistan continues to be referred to as a "middle power" with significant diplomatic potential that can be utilized in mediation and peacebuilding (Mozaffari Falarti et al., 2024).

2.4. Critical Evaluation of Existing Literature

The available literature on US-Iran relations along with Pakistan's diplomacy presents both positive and negative aspects. The relationship and its historical and strategic dimensions generate a great deal of interest; however, most of the literature suffers from an overemphasis on the state and the realist paradigm, thus ignoring

diplomatic and constructive peacebuilding efforts. In the literature on peace and diplomacy, particularly from a policy perspective, the perspectives of liberalism and peace advocacy emerge; however, they remain theoretically underdeveloped, and the theoretical possibilities for conflict resolution are unbalanced (Sakhi, 2023).

Moreover, most academic studies of US-Iran relations focus solely on the bilateral level, neglecting the involvement of third parties, while Pakistani scholarship, despite the strategic importance of its role, mostly overlooks Pakistan's agency as a possible mediator of American-Iranian conflicts. At present, the majority of literature on Pakistan's foreign policy relations focuses on its neighboring countries or relations with major powers, with little attention to Pakistan's inter-conflict diplomatic role. This has been a major limitation in comprehending Pakistan's role in global peace processes.

Another issue that has been widely noted is the lack of analysis regarding changes in geopolitics, US foreign policy, Iran's position in the region, and shifts toward a new world order characterized by multiple global centers of power, beyond traditional security frameworks toward geoeconomics and information-age warfare in US-Iran relations. Therefore, there is an obvious need for more integrated and comprehensive research that reflects the contemporary paradigm (Bahgat, 2023).

2.5. Research Gap

The literature has mostly focused on US-Iran relations and Pakistan's foreign policy in theory, while an integrated analysis of Pakistan's role in the mediation of Iranian-American relations has been largely neglected. In recent shifts in global politics, the role of Pakistani leadership in mediation and peace-building has been mostly overlooked. Furthermore, the role that middle power diplomacy plays in resolving conflicts has been insufficiently explored. This research attempts to integrate theory with the practice of diplomacy regarding Pakistan's strategic role in building peace.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This research employs qualitative, doctrinal criticism as its design. Its purpose is to evaluate Pakistani leadership and diplomacy to determine the contribution they make to the cause of peace in the world in the case of the US-Iran war. Doctrinal research is in-depth, analytical, interpretative, and library-based. It is more focused on knowledge and information surveys and requires less fieldwork. It is particularly useful for research in the field of International Relations dealing with the subtleties of politics and diplomacy. Exploratory research aims to learn how and to what extent, as a middle-power state, Pakistan could promote peace between the two significant geopolitical adversaries. Analytical work will help determine the structure of the problem and the diplomatic value of peace. Because of the frameworks of Realism and Liberalism, especially Peace, the research design is conflict- and diplomacy-driven. The design helps evaluate historical events, policies, and interpretations of Pakistan as a country to determine its ability to promote peace and remain a contributor to global peace.

3.2. Data Collection Method

This research is purely doctrinal in nature and derives its data in a qualitative and purely secondary manner. Primary data have not been collected, nor have surveys, interviews, or direct observations been conducted. Published academic literature, especially peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and reports published by research, policy, and think-tank organizations, as well as credible databases developed by international organizations, have been used. The literature sources build a theoretical, historical, and analytical framework for studying U.S.-Iran relations and the foreign policy disposition of Pakistan (Choudary, 2024). The systematic collection of secondary literature sources helps interpret the research critically and examine and synthesize the complex elements. International relations and diplomatic studies solidify the research, as accessing primary sources of

diplomatic interactions is often restricted and classified.

3.3. Sample Size

Determining a fixed sample size is impossible as it is a qualitative doctrinal study. The study is based on a purposive sample containing 40–60 highly relevant and credible secondary sources, including peer-reviewed published articles, books, institutional papers, and research and policy papers. These papers are focused on the study's research themes, including US-Iran tensions, conflicts, and diplomatic negotiations, and Pakistan's international relations. It is of primary importance to construct research of a complex nature within the framework of a legal paradigm.

3.4. Sampling Technique

The primary sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. This technique is appropriate for doctrinal studies as it gives the researcher the autonomy to identify the sources to achieve the study's aim. The researcher thus has the freedom to indicate the sources to be included in the study. The key elements of purposive sampling when determining the most appropriate sources include relevance, scholarly integrity, and the role of the source in building international relations, especially in the context of existing US relations vis-à-vis Pakistan's diplomatic relations (Bukhari et al., 2024a). This essentially means that relevant peer-reviewed publications, recognized scholarly books, and publications by international NGOs and other intergovernmental organizations would be prioritized. This sampling technique assists the researcher in determining the most relevant sources and, in turn, adds some degree of validity and reliability to the study.

3.5. Data Sources

The study collects data through the systematic analysis of library and digital sources (data collation). The selected academic literature sources are drawn from relevant academic databases (e.g., Google Scholar, JSTOR, and other institutional repositories and similar databases). In addition, to provide the collected literature with more context, policy reports, think-tank analyses,

and studies of international relations are considered from the relevant perspective. The collected literature is organized in line with the main elements of diplomacy, the rationality of Pakistan's tension and conflict theories, and Pakistan's policy. This research is doctrinal in nature. Hence, all data collected consists of secondary literature to ensure that the research is framed with utmost policy integrity.

3.6. Data Analysis

For this analysis, I implemented qualitative content analysis augmented by thematic analysis. The organized literature was thoroughly examined for elements, patterns, and ideas in relation to the US-Iran conflict and the role Pakistan's diplomacy plays. During this analysis, the literature was synthesized, allowing relational and rational gaps to be filled and providing pointers for the analytical tool framework (Bukhari et al., 2024b). Data was interpreted to look for patterns of diplomacy and conflict beyond the rational, including relational and Liberal/Realist-Rationalist themes and theories of peacemaking and diplomacy. Pakistan, in this light, partially fits this framework and provides balance whereby it can be considered a pivotal actor in supporting mediation and peacemaking processes, and a pivotal actor in strengthening international peace through flexible and rational diplomacy.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Doctrinal Analysis of US-Iran Conflict

The doctrinal analysis of the US-Iran conflict presents a complex and multifaceted view of the conflict, both politically, strategically, and ideologically. The relevant literature goes well beyond direct confrontations and engages with economic theory, cyber conflicts, proxy conflicts, and so on, all of which are interrelated within the broader geopolitical framework that characterizes the struggle for control of the Middle East region. Simplistically, the conflict presents few opportunities for improvement because, strategically, the interest of the US is to control the region, while the technological and military interest of Iran is to resist and oppose such control. Ideologically, the factors are even more

problematic, and limited bargaining diplomacy has little success. In a situation with Iran, policymakers have little choice but to implement sanctions and, de facto, continue the conflict. This conflict is more structural than political.

4.2. Pakistan's Diplomatic Posture in Literature

Pakistan's location and, as a result, its limited choices account for its status as a major player in world events. Many describe Pakistan as a medium power and a player in the delicate balance of power between the United States and Iran. Doctrinal sources argue that, due to cultural, geographical, and economic factors, Pakistan has been aligned with Iran for a long time. At the same time, Pakistan has had a longstanding partnership with the US in defense and the so-called 'Global War on Terror' (GWOT). Therefore, Pakistan has been regarded as a possible diplomatic intermediary while engaging with both Iran and the US simultaneously. However, the literature mentions that Pakistan's foreign relations have been largely passive, structured mainly by domestic political and economic conditions. In this context, Pakistan has consistently been a country with the potential for active diplomacy and a possible player in the mediation of Middle Eastern conflicts.

4.3. Evaluation of Pakistan's Leadership Role

There is room for cautious optimism in an examination of Pakistan's leadership position in doctrinal literature. Constructively, the participation of Pakistan's leadership in regional peace-facilitating diplomacy, with roles as a facilitator and back channel in Afghanistan, has been noted. Conversely, there is also potential for Pakistan to assume a higher tier of global diplomatic mediation. However, leadership constraints such as political instability, economic dependence, and a repeatable, cyclical foreign policy detract from the durability of Pakistan's mediation attempts. Most notably, doctrinal analysis suggests Pakistan's leadership retains the appropriate level of experience and has the unique position and geography to support initiatives that call for serious mediation, as long as it receives

support from a long-term, structured, and coherent foreign policy.

4.4. Challenges Identified in Literature

Most of the literature delineates challenges faced by Pakistan as a diplomatic mediator between the US and Iran. Economic weakness is one of these. Without a strong economy, Pakistan is reliant on foreign support, which reduces its policy scope. Besides navigating global interdependence through great power diplomacy, Pakistan faces an intricate relationship of subordination within this interdependence, requiring it to act with great caution to avoid diplomatic isolation. Persistent internal political instability, which has been noted to perpetuate a lack of active and pragmatic international policy, further contributes to weaknesses along Pakistan's western border in the context of regional constraints and imbalanced policy. In doctrinal literature, Pakistan's diplomacy is mainly characterized as moderating diplomacy, although it is undermined by a lack of authenticity.

4.5. Effectiveness of Diplomacy (Secondary Source Analysis)

Ultimately, multiple sources identify that diplomacy, above all, is critical to avoiding the intensification of US–Iran hostility, requiring consistency and political durability. It shows that under certain circumstances, diplomacy, particularly diplomatic negotiations and multilateralism, may be effective in cooling tensions and preventing escalation. Nevertheless, the situation remains fragile, relations are strained, and conditions are neither fully peaceful nor entirely conflict-free. Concerning Pakistan, some sources emphasize the necessity for Pakistan to remain diplomatically neutral and consistent. There is potential for Pakistan to take on the role of a central actor in regional geopolitics, involving it on several fronts in multilayered US–Iran negotiations.

4.6. Thematic Findings

There is a second strand of analysis that is systematically focused on doctrinal literature, revealing several themes. The first is that US–Iran

hostilities, as a slow-burning conflict, are a function of geopolitical structural antagonism, misunderstanding, and spiraling insecurity. Secondly, Pakistan is identified as a potential peacebuilding actor that is both strategically located and diplomatically underutilized. Thirdly, trust-building diplomacy is recognized as a necessary, though insufficient, tool in resolving prolonged international conflicts without enduring political commitment. Fourthly, the literature identifies the concept of structural-hole diplomacy of middle powers as a strategically useful yet underdeveloped component of international conflict resolution. Finally, the gaps in Pakistan's mediation potential are linked to the practical implementation of diplomacy.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Synthesis of Doctrinal Findings

The doctrinal analysis engaged in this study offers an understanding of the US–Iran conflict, gauging the prospects of Pakistani leadership and diplomacy for the promotion of global peace. The findings suggest that the US–Iran conflict exists based on historical animosities, the absence of trust, ideological divides, and the ongoing competition of geopolitics in the region. The literature largely agrees that the conflict sustains engagement in both direct and indirect critical and proxy confrontations in several regional theatres. From a theoretical perspective, Realism defines the intense security competition between these states, whilst Liberalism focuses on the relatively weak, albeit critical, role of diplomacy and international bodies. Peace theory suggests the need for a structural shift and mechanisms for long-term settlement of the conflict. In light of these empirical and theoretical findings, Pakistan is regarded as a strategically pivotal locus of contribution to the peace process. Therefore, the findings of the doctrinal sources suggest that, despite the fact that the issue is multifaceted and entrenched, Pakistan's diplomacy of peace should be appreciated as an important endeavour that seeks to promote the reduction of the conflict.

5.2. Evaluation Based on Secondary Evidence

Based on the secondary evidence, it is noted that diplomatic relations between the USA and Iran have been both positive and negative, and that there have been frameworks for analysis, but overall, there have been very few. Documented empirical evidence indicates that although there have been positive diplomatic developments, such as the signing of a treaty on nuclear diplomacy, there is room for positive relations, as these examples are subject to reversal and loss based on changes in government regimes or leaders and their strategic diplomacy. Secondary evidence indicates that sanctions, grievance diplomacy, and proxy wars reinforce mutual enmity. In this regard, middle-tier diplomacy is also gaining importance in the ongoing relations of major powers. Pakistan's role in the analyzed literature is seen as comparatively important, but the potential is viewed as underutilized. This is where Pakistan's case is most supported by grey literature, as Pakistan's diplomatic activities and balanced relations with the USA and Iran endorse the possibility of diplomacy and mediation on the active side, but due to limitations in practice, direct interstate conflict initiatives remain elusive.

5.3. Overall Assessment of Pakistan's Diplomatic Contribution

With respect to doctrinal findings, Pakistan's diplomatic contributions are assessed through potential, constraints, and strategic importance. Pakistan's geo-strategic location enables it to sustain relationships with both conflict parties. In theory, Pakistan can help achieve this objective by serving as a communication bridge and facilitating both indirect and direct reductions of tensions. Through literature, especially with regard to the Afghan and South Asian peace processes, Pakistan's regional diplomatic endeavors have been recognized as evidence of its facilitative diplomatic role. Afghanistan's peace process, however, contributed to the US-Iran context mainly in a peripheral and symbolic manner. Among Pakistan's structural constraints, the most salient are economic, domestic political, and externally perceived limitations. Pakistan's unresolved doctrinal concerns have been

perceived to indicate the potential for Pakistan's efforts to focus on and strengthen regional diplomacy and apply its soft power to facilitate peace. The chief focus must then be on the gaps in Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, in relation to their perceived potential. Pakistan's direct contributions to global peace efforts are characterized by the need for balance in its strategic concerns.

5.4. Link to Broader Global Peace Discourse

This study links to the broader, global, and inclusive discourse on peace, diplomacy, and conflict management as it relates to the dynamics of international relations. In the current complex global environment, as the world becomes increasingly multipolar, power-based conflict management approaches seem ineffective in resolving the complex nature of the US-Iran conflict. The study acknowledges a growing understanding that middle powers, as well as regional players, are able to engage constructively in dialogue, lessen negative impacts, and persevere in various peace processes. Pakistan's regional and diplomatic potential also falls within this broader context of inclusive global peace, where peace and governance rely on the contributions of middle or smaller powers. Trust-building relates to the continuous nature of diplomacy as a process, i.e., sustained efforts and institutional interaction. The key doctrinal literature concludes that the US-Iran conflict, as one of the most threatening conflicts in the world, presents Pakistan with an opportunity to counteract adverse effects and create new pathways for discourse-based peace.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Policy Recommendations Based on Literature

The analysis of literature on US-Iran relations and Pakistan's diplomacy features key insights that may enhance and optimize Pakistan's role in peacebuilding efforts. Firstly, Pakistan's approach toward diplomacy should be formal and systematic, especially in conflict mediation in areas of direct interest where Pakistan has an equitable relationship with the contending parties. The literature shows that reactive, ad hoc diplomacy

restricts long-range influence, while strategic planning enhances both credibility and effectiveness. Hence, the institutions of Pakistan's foreign policy should focus on building peace and conflict diplomacy. The second principle is policy continuity. Frequent interruptions in Pakistan's diplomatic focus, brought about by internal political changes, undermine the trust of the involved parties. An enduring peace-oriented approach, even across rival political systems, enhances Pakistan's credibility as a peace facilitator. The third principle is the practice of knowledge diplomacy, where Pakistan prioritizes the construction of better peace policy through research. Pakistan should ensure that, with the help of knowledge diplomacy, its international peace policy is better informed on the basis of empirical and current research.

6.2. Strengthening Diplomatic Frameworks

Diplomacy-related literature calls for capacitating systems of diplomacy. Pakistan's Foreign Service system would benefit from modernization involving conflict mediation training and geopolitical expertise. Middle East-related diplomatic activities and U.S.-Iran diplomatic units (or teams) and components should be placed under a dedicated Middle Eastern U.S.-Iran diplomatic unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs. These components should possess the ability to monitor regional developments and suggest diplomatic actions for the Department of Foreign Affairs. Expanding staff and upgrading the equipment of Pakistan's diplomatic institutions would strengthen Pakistan's diplomatic standing. Developing backchannel diplomacy is highly recommended, as informal channels have played a significant role in de-escalating many of the most difficult international affairs in the past. There is also a need to strengthen coordination between civil and military leadership to create unity in Pakistan's approach to decisive international actions.

6.3. Enhancing Reliance on Multilateral Diplomacy

This research shows that one way diplomacy can address global conflict is through the use of

multilateral diplomacy. Building on this premise, if Pakistan seeks to engage more actively at a multilateral level, it should enhance its support for regional and international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Through these platforms, dialogue can occur in a safer space, reducing the risk of unconstructive face-to-face engagement. Pakistan must act as a catalyst for multilateral peace diplomacy. From the research, Pakistan can also increase its diplomatic reach by cooperating with middle powers involved in peace advocacy. Examining the diplomatic methods of the United States and Iran may also advance peace. Pakistan can further increase its support for peace diplomacy and promote law-abiding peace, where negotiations replace coercive measures such as sanctions or threats.

6.4. Improving Strategic Neutrality

Several works define desirable neutrality as a defining characteristic of diplomatic success. In Pakistan's case, between the USA and Iran, desirable neutrality implies a fair and balanced diplomatic approach. This should not signal a complete departure from bilateral alliances. Nor should bilateral relationships confine Pakistan's opportunities for mediation diplomacy. Pakistan is often perceived as aligned with one or more great powers, thus undermining its neutral diplomatic stance. Managing foreign relations while maintaining fairness without compromising neutrality must be a priority for Pakistan. Additionally, in multilateral forums, Pakistan can assert itself as a country of peace and diplomacy. Desirable neutrality will strengthen the confidence of all stakeholders.

6.5. Areas for Future Research (Including Empirical Studies)

Analyzing previously published research has identified many gaps in existing literature, highlighting the importance of continued study. First is the need to examine real-world examples of middle power diplomacy interventions in major global conflicts. Research could also focus on comparative analyses of successful mediation efforts by countries in the same geographical

region as Pakistan. Another notable area is the analysis of public diplomacy and soft power initiatives that contribute to building and strengthening Pakistan's peacebuilding image. The role of economic diplomacy in conflict resolution, including trade and energy collaboration, should also be studied as a means of easing prolonged geopolitical tensions. The impact of digital and cyber diplomacy in modern conflict management, along with the use of technological platforms in diplomacy, represents another underexplored area requiring attention. Future studies should also include field-based empirical research involving scholars, practitioners of international relations, and diplomats to better understand how theoretical diplomatic practices can be effectively implemented in real-world contexts.

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