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RESEARCH PAPER

Variations in Pakistan's Policy of Neutrality during the Middle Eastern Conflicts

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan has a proclaimed policy of neutrality towards Middle Eastern politics due to the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. By explaining the multiple factors behind Saudi-Iran rivalry this research article would measure the scale of neutrality in Pakistan's foreign policy towards Middle East. By adopting the John Scot's model of Documentary analysis in qualitative research, the researcher has designed a criterion of analyzing the neutrality in Pakistan's foreign policy towards Middle East. As, there are multiple indicators of neutrality that can help in measuring Pakistan's position of neutrality towards Saudi-Iran rivalry in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. To explain variation in Pakistan's policy of neutrality, we employ theoretical perspectives of realism and constructivism that helped us to systemically study this variation by factoring in domestic, regional, and international factors. Through this analysis, it was found that even though, mainly due to its identity as a Sunni-majority country, Pakistan tilts towards Saudi-backed bloc of Sunni states, it also tries to appease Iran and its allies for security and economic reasons. This situation requires Pakistan to stay neutral during Middle Eastern conflicts. However, regional, and international pressures compel it to relax this policy. As each conflict has unique regional and international dynamics, Pakistan adjusts its policy of neutrality to ensure its security and to gain maximum economic benefits.

| **Keywords:** | Middle Eastern Politics, Neutrality, Pakistan's Foreign Policy, Syrian and Iraqi Conflict, Yemen |

Introduction

The analysis of states' foreign policies has been the distinctive area of inquiry in international relations. A number of theories of international relations describe the state behavior in the context of domestic politics. Nonetheless, states cannot formulate operative foreign policies without understanding the connections between domestic and global politics. In order to fully analyze Pakistan's foreign policy towards Middle East, in this paper we analyze both domestic and international factors in the context of realism and constructivism. Broader regional and international political and strategic context is provided by realism, while connection between domestic and international factors is explained by constructivism.

For the sake of precision, we specifically analyze Pakistan's policy of neutrality towards the region of Middle East. Realism, especially neorealism, was very effective in explaining balance of power situation in Middle East. This balance of power situation exists in the context of Saudi and Iranian rivalry and both states' ambitions for regional hegemony. International political dynamics, especially competition between US, China and Russia is also effectively explained by neorealism. Constructivism, on the other hand, provided good

insights to factor in ideology (especially religious affiliations) and identity in international affairs. Other domestic factors like public opinion and party in power also contribute to the foreign policy of Pakistan.

To explain Pakistan's foreign policy, the concept of neutrality is explained in detail in this paper. Not only historical evolution and legal interpretation of this concept is explored, its practical application in the context of regional and international politics has also been examined. Review of the literature on neutrality outlines different types of neutrality. It also explains why states follow policy of neutrality and how it helps states maneuver through international strategic and political environment? It also singles out potential political, strategic, and economic benefits that states can gain through the policy of neutrality. All this review helped us map out the contour of Pakistan's neutrality towards Middle Eastern politics.

Literature Review

Neutrality has existed as an important concept throughout the history of international relations as a legal concept as well as political and military strategy. Much of the research work in this regard emphasizes individual case studies of different neutral states, rather than the development of a theory that helps operationalization of this concept at international level (Goetschel, 1998). The meaning of neutrality has evolved from a purely legal concept to a broader political concept. Due to this evolution, neutrality as a concept has been regarded differently by different adherent states that claim to observe this principle.

The historical record makes it clear that neutrality is a state-centric policy which was developed in direct response to power politics in Europe in order to deal with the pressures of great powers. As an international institution, neutrality consists of widely understood conventions, principles and practices to reconcile the objectives of belligerents by constraining the use of force and allowing parties to negotiate over sensitive issues of interest during the times of war. Neutrality has long been used as a tool to constrain conflict and limit the expansion of war. Bauslaugh (1991) finds remarkable similarity between the code of conduct established during the Greek city-state system and modern neutrality laws. In the Middle Ages, states recognized the right of freedom of navigation in Mediterranean during wartimes (Jessup, 1936). By the 1400, neutrality, as an official document, was accepted by states and during the 1500 it became a regular part of diplomatic relations. Afterwards, neutrality became a legitimate aspect of international relations after the Thirty-Year War and states started to accept and comply to a powerful normative standard of conduct for neutral states. Furthermore, as Politis (1935) discusses, multiple wars fought between Scandinavian and North European states during the seventeen and eighteen centuries helped to refine the neutrality laws and principles of conduct for neutral states. Historically, it is significant to note that neutrality had become an institution by the end of the 18th century and proved to be an effective medium to limit intensity of conflicts between belligerents and neutrals (Hupe, 1954). To put the historical context in perspective, Leos Muller, the author of the book titled "Neutrality in World History," offers a lucid amalgamation of five hundred years' history of neutrality adopted by different states in international history. According to him, the world history has always been viewed as a history of European great powers, their colonial expansions and imperialism, but the role of small states has not been recognized in maintaining the world order. Traditionally, United States of America had adopted neutrality as a foreign policy option in all the major wars and conflicts for 150 years until Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1773, American President George Washington announced neutrality by declaring impartiality of USA in the conflict between France and Great Britain. Due to this policy, the USA remained neutral during the Napoleonic Wars. Similarly, during the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson stayed away from the conflict until March 1917. Until 1939, US Congress passed a number of Neutrality Acts such as Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, 1937 and 1939.

In international law, neutrality is seen as a legal status which involves some roles and duties on the part of neutral states towards belligerents and on the part of belligerents towards neutrals with respect to conflicts existing between rival states. According to The Hague Convention of 1907, neutrality is defined as an act of non-participation in foreign conflicts which includes the refusal of providing any military assistance and the use of neutral's territory to transport troops. Most essential to the character of a professed neutral, however, is the rejection of any form of military alliance.

Pertti Joenniemi in his article "Neutrality beyond the Cold War" presents three types of neutrality, including ad hoc or temporary neutrality, de jure neutrality or neutrality by international law, and de facto neutrality (Joenniemi, 1993). He further explains that ad hoc or temporary neutrality is adopted by states during the time of war between the belligerents. The examples of this type of neutrality can be traced back to the history when Spain adopted neutrality during the WWII and Iran remained neutral during the Gulf War in 1990. Realism perceives this type of neutrality as a manifestation of national interests. Ad hoc neutrality does not impose restrictions on the states to follow the politico-legal principles in future wars between the belligerents. Joenniemi writes that de jure neutrality or neutrality by international law is the second form of neutrality which means that neutrality of a state can be measured through international agreements regarding the neutralization of a state. De jure neutrality is a permanent form of neutrality adopted by the states voluntarily and determined by the principles of international law. Neutrality adopted by Switzerland during the Napoleonic wars in 1815 was the expression of permanent neutrality. It is obligatory for such neutral states to follow international agreements. These agreements describe the responsibilities and duties of the belligerents as well as other stakeholders during the war time and even during the time of peace. De facto neutrality is the third type of neutrality which is adopted by states without the compulsion of international law, yet their neutrality is largely recognized by international community. For example, neutrality adopted by Finland and Sweden is the manifestation of de facto neutrality. De facto neutrality is adopted without signing international treaties. Most glaring example is that of the Vatican City which is a formal de facto neutral state.

Historically, states have adopted neutrality on the basis of their geographical position, security needs and political objectives. Laurent Goetschel in his article titled "Neutrality, a Really Dead Concept?" presents four principles that states follow while adopting neutrality, including non-participation in conflicts between the belligerents, abstaining from starting a war, defending neutrality, and non-participation in any strategies and policies that might lead to a conflict (Goetschel, 1999). Small states establish neutrality by having political impartiality, developing some military capability, and establishing diplomatic networking to maintain their neutrality. All neutral states, whether they are practicing de facto neutrality or de jure neutrality, have to follow all these legal and political principles. Resultantly, it is the obligation of neutral states to maintain a position of impartiality and detachment towards all belligerents, while on the other hand belligerent states are not allowed to interfere with the territorial integrity of the neutral states.

Neutrality, as a military and political strategy, has played a significant role in mediating and mitigating the sources of tension between rivals or competing blocs. By providing a framework for rational discourse between the main players, neutral states prefer to regulate and expand their trade and commerce with belligerents to establish parameters of acceptable behavior during the times of crises (Granville, 1909). There are a lot of cases in the history of international relations that provide a detailed analysis of law and politics of neutrality. Although neutrality has long played a vital role in preventing wars and limiting the magnitude of destruction, once the intensity of conflict reaches a critical point, neutrality has proved to be less effective device for mitigating the destruction of war and was openly manipulated by different states. For example, when WWI broke out, states from both sides set up networks of neutrality arrangements and utilized neutrality as a mechanism to mitigate hostilities in certain regions for maximum strategic advantages.

During the First World War many countries used the institution of neutrality to take military advantage over their enemies. For example, several attempts were made by Britain to bargain its position of neutrality to limit German plans for further aggression (Massie, 1991). Similarly, Britain also asked Turkey to remain neutral at the cost of Turkey's territorial integrity. Resultantly, Turkish statecraft utilized neutrality as a diplomatic tool as war intensified. (Fromkin, 1989).

Some states follow the policy of neutrality for geopolitical and geostrategic reasons. After Finland came into being in 1919, it formally adopted neutrality policy to avoid deterioration in relations with Soviet Union due to its geopolitical position. Likewise, neutralization of Austria was employed by Soviet Union as a precondition before they withdrew from Austria. Resultantly, neutrality became a tool employed by superpowers to reduce the intensity of crises among themselves. It can be found that neutrality emerged in response to the power politics in Europe in order to safeguard state's sovereignty and it can only be practiced when neutrality as a policy is recognized and respected by the world powers.

Following World War II, the emergence of bi-polar world order divided the world into two opposing superpower blocs. At the same time, post war collective security arrangements under the United Nation posed a threat to neutrality. Under the post-war collective security regime, neutrality started to be dissolved as a practical element of foreign policy and became a loosely defined symbol with normative political legitimacy. The changing nature of security threats urged the neutral states to revisit their policies to satisfy their public which created a flexible vision of neutrality. In his article published in 1983, Harto Hakovirta considers geography as the most significant factor behind the adoption of neutrality by a number of Western small states such as Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, and Finland (Hakovirta, 1983). Most of the original adherents, except Sweden and Switzerland, started to redefine their position of neutrality. Resultantly, questions were raised about the ultimate utility of neutrality (Jakobson, 1998). Josef Binter defines a model of neutrality by describing the factors behind the imposition of the policy of neutrality on Finland and Austria by the occupying powers due to the reorganization of world order and their weaker military deterrence (Binter, 1989). Similarly, other researchers describe the factors behind the evolution and adoption of neutrality under the global security regime after WWII and also discuss the conditions of its desirability and viability (Hopper, 1945). For example, Switzerland and Sweden adopted the policy of neutrality due to their historical precedence as Sweden had practiced neutrality for over 200 years. Some neutral states sought neutrality to decrease tensions among states through mediation and to avoid indiscriminate criticism of great powers. Historically, it is difficult to find examples of neutrality outside Europe, North America and South America. However, in the aftermath of the Second World War and the resultant Cold War, 120 developing countries, mostly from Asia and Africa, formed the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which is narrowly associated with the concept of neutrality. NAM emerged during the Cold War when a number of states such as India, Yugoslavia and Indonesia laid foundation of this movement, because these states were unwilling to align themselves with America or Soviet Union. In other words, NAM was a direct result of the Cold War politics.

Many studies explain the conditions that allow a state to adopt neutrality by conducting a comparative case study of different European neutral states such as Sweden, Finland, Austria, Ireland etc. (Jesse, 2006). During the Cold War, this policy provided Sweden with prestige at world stage and public reinforced the policy of neutrality by electing Social Democrats in power again. The contest between two competing blocks during the Cold War created a global balance of power which is directly aligned with the realist's explanation of international politics. (Sheehan, 2005). Furthermore, for realists self-preservation of a state is the formative factor in international politics. According to Morgenthau, national security concerns are the fundamental motive behind the adoption of neutrality (Morgenthau, 1958). Small states play a key role in preserving the international status quo by adopting balancing

behavior. Some political and geographical factors limit the foreign policy options of small states. For example, proximity of Finland and Austria to Warsaw Pact states created their vulnerability during the early days of the Cold War. Resultantly, both the countries took logical and rational decision by adopting neutrality and appeasing the USSR to preserve their sovereignty. Furthermore, Sweden and Switzerland became the part of new neutral bloc by showing political impartiality, developing some military capability, and establishing diplomatic networking to maintain their neutrality. Hence, during the Cold War, this neutral bloc in Europe became a buffer between the East and the West that helped maintain status quo and stabilize balance of power in the region (Hakovirta, 1983). Both the superpowers accepted neutrality of these states and established mutual constraint towards neutral states that contributed to create an overall balance of power between the two blocs. For neorealism, the adoption of neutrality by these states in Europe was the outcome of the structure of international politics. In this sense, neutrality is the direct outcome of international political structure. Overall, there were five countries that were part of "big five" neutral states, including Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland and Ireland. Neutrality has been used by these states as a most convenient diplomatic mechanism to maintain status quo. Due to the neutral position of these countries, a number of headquarters of international organizations were established in these countries during the Cold War. For example, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was established in Vienna and the UN established its European headquarters in Switzerland.

After the Cold War, when Austria, Finland and Sweden joined European Union, neutrality lost its relevance in post-Cold War Europe. Previously, these countries did not apply for the membership of EU fearing that it would challenge their position of neutrality. However, in the post- Cold war era with the ending of Soviet Union in 1991, neutrality became less significant and redundant concept in Europe (Goetschel, 1999). After the collapse of Soviet Union, the concept of international security emerged, and NATO established several programs and structures, such as Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and "Partnership for Peace" to design a new security mechanism for Europe that legitimized role of NATO vis-à-vis neutral states. Meanwhile, the "big five" neutral states of Europe joined these NATO led programs and structures. Consequently, in the post-Cold War world neutrality has become less significant in Europe as it can play a marginal role in creating and maintaining balance of power. Most recently, a multi-polar balance of power has evolved with the rise of China, re-emergence of Russia and rise of new economies such as India and Brazil. In this background, realism observes that current global balance of power has returned to usual international politics which leaves little space for small states to adopt neutrality. For example, Muller argues that, after 9/11, George W. Bush asked the nations of the world to join the Global War on Terror without being neutral in this conflict, because being neutral was not an option. Still neutrality has been remained an option for the small states during the conflicts and wars (Müller, 2019).

Despite its long history of being unrealistic or immoral, neutrality is still considered as an effective foreign policy option during the conflicts and wars between the belligerents. Switzerland, Denmark, Netherland, Austria, Ireland and Finland are among those countries that adopted neutrality as an effective option during the wars and conflicts. As a result, these countries are considered the best places to live in. Furthermore, in today's global economy these countries are among the wealthiest and well-functioning welfare states with socially and culturally developed nations. Neutrality remained a significant feature of their modern national identity and foreign policy. Although neutrality is not the sole reason behind their success, it has significantly contributed to the reduction of risks for these states.

Nevertheless, in today's multipolar balance of power world, neutrality is considered as a realistic and logical option for a number of small states (Müller, 2019).

To sum up the above discussion on the evolution of the concept of neutrality, we can identify five major themes. First, the concept of neutrality was historically linked to the

context of war, where (mostly weaker states) sought neutral position to avoid being entangled in wars. Later on, neutrality became a strategy by some weaker states to navigate through international politics. Second, legal developments regarding the concept of neutrality guide interactions between neutral and non-neutral states. Legal guidelines also take into account dynamics of conflicts and international politics. Third, the concept of neutrality is dependent upon the context of international politics. As dynamics of international politics change, meanings of neutrality also change. By definition, neutrality requires dynamics of international politics, otherwise, we will not know what non-neutral means. Non-neutral can only be defined in the prevailing political context of an era. In this sense, realist argument is valid which emphasizes that international strategic environment determines behavior of the neutral states. Fourth, states pursuing the policy of neutrality enjoy many benefits. Not only such states can avoid wars and destruction, but they can also gain trade and other economic benefits through engagements with opposing parties in a conflict. Finally, neutral states are in a much better position to mitigate international conflicts by becoming a buffer between belligerent parties and providing venues and other opportunities to the belligerents to negotiate their differences.

Material and Methods

As the foregoing literature review indicates, there are multiple indicators of neutrality which can help to measure Pakistan's position of neutrality towards Middle East. These indicators are derived from international law of neutrality and international treaties, particularly the Paris Declaration of 1857, and the Hague Convention of 1907. Existing literature also highlight many factors due to which states adopt the position of neutrality. In this respect, context of international security and politics is very vital. In order to measure Pakistan's position of neutrality towards Middle East, possible indicators must be tested to see the extent to which Pakistan's position towards Middle East adheres to the position of neutrality. The researchers pursued an analytical and descriptive route by reviewing literature on the topic. Primary and secondary data is analyzed to explain intricacies of Middle Eastern politics. Furthermore, documents related to Pakistani foreign policy are studied to explain Pakistan's position vis-à-vis Middle Eastern politics.

Pakistan's proclaimed neutral policy towards Middle East

As it is difficult to explain Pakistan's policy of neutrality without explaining the context of the Middle Eastern politics, it is imperative that we explain key dynamics of Middle Eastern politics before getting into the intricacies of Pakistani position. Regarding Middle Eastern politics, it can be argued that all the regional affairs in Middle East are deep rooted in history which is marked by social, cultural, ethnic and religious cleavages between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The recent tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are the ultimate outcome of the historical competition between these two states, which is mostly, but not exclusively, geopolitical in nature. Resultantly, bitter ideological and geopolitical differences, different political philosophies, aspirations for Islamic leadership in the region, different visions regarding oil prices in the global oil market, and sectarian and ethnics differences have divided the Saudi and Iranian populations. These differences have led to a chronic hostility which converted this rivalry to the level of a cold war. Furthermore, regional and Western commentators have identified that US has always been capitalizing on this Shia-Sunni divide, along with other sources of hostility between these two nations. The US has especially authorized Saudi Arabia as "Arab balancer" to counter the influence of Iran in the region. Despite external influences, political factionalism has remained a certain factor in the deterioration of bilateral relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Nonneman, 2005). Gulf commentators note that fluctuations in foreign policy approaches of both countries are the ultimate outcome of the regional changes, rather than the expression of the national interests (Hanizadeh, 2008). Some commentators argue that the Saudi desire to be the senior partner without having the ability was the most significant factor behind the deterioration of partnership between two states (Chubin & Tripp, 1996).

Regarding Pakistan's policy towards Middle East, it is to note that Pakistan has maintained strong and cordial relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran, and has always claimed neutrality in the Middle Eastern affairs. The Application of different indicators of neutrality on Pakistan's position towards the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran provides a deeper understanding of Pakistan' s behavior towards Middle East. However, regarding Pakistani neutrality, multiple factors contribute to create discrepancies in Pakistan's proclaimed foreign policy of neutrality and varying degree of its practical application. Factors behind these discrepancies include regional and global politics, ideology, geopolitics, historical and religious affinities, religious credentials of Pakistan's political parties, and most importantly, economic and security-related issues. In his research article, Sial (2015) explores change in Pakistani Government which influences its policy towards Middle East.

In the case of Yemen crisis Pakistan violated different indicators of neutrality defined by the international laws. Especially, non-participation in military alliance is the key indicator of neutrality, which was violated by Pakistan in this crisis. Initially, apprehensions were expressed regarding joining Saudi-led forces against Houthis in Yemen. In 2015, during a five-day joint parliamentary session held on Yemen, concerns were raised by the lawmakers. Resultantly, Government of Pakistan refused to send military troops to join Saudi-led forces in Yemen, as it could annoy Iran which shares 780 km border with Pakistan. This stance against Iran could also create sectarian divide within Pakistani society. Surprisingly, despite all these apprehensions and fears, Pakistani inclusion in Saudi-led military alliance with 5000 military personals was the violation of the first indicator of neutrality. At the formative phase, this alliance was Sunni-dominated as it excluded 23 other Shia majority members of OIC, including Iran, Iraq and Syria (Gaub, 2016). It is pertinent to mention that, contrary to Pakistani position during the Yemen crisis, Pakistan tried to maintain a strict neutral policy during the Syrian Crisis. These shifts in Pakistani policy could be explained by Pakistani domestic politics.

Overall, despite differences in policies, Pakistan's overall commitment to stay neutral has not wavered. Even over the Syrian's military unverified use of chemical weapons, Pakistan powerfully condemned the United States' decision to intervene in Syrian crisis against the Assad regime. Pakistan also criticized other Western powers by stressing on the political solution of Syrian crisis, which shows a significant shift in Pakistan's foreign policy towards the Western world. By keeping the consequences of Iraq war in view, Pakistan linked the survival of Assad's regime with stable Syria and adopted pro-regime policy towards Syria, which opened new opportunities for Pakistan by strengthening its relations with China and Russia — the leaders of pro-regime bloc in the UN. The trade relations between Pakistan and Syria, however, had disturbed due to the downfall in Syrian economy and hike in petrol prices in international market during Syrian crises. During Nawaz Sharif Government, to appease Saudi Arabia, Pakistan's anti-Assad position became the reason of sectarian division in Pakistan. A large number of military volunteers from marginalized Shi'ite community from Parachinar, Pakistan, had joined Zeinabiyoon, a Shia militant unit operated through social media. Previously, Parachinar had already witnessed a number of terrorist attacks that caused hundreds of casualties in Pakistan. Resultantly, Pakistan adopted an official stance of "strict neutrality" during the Syrian crisis to appease both Saudi Arabia and Iran.

In the case of Iraq, Pakistan has tried its best to maintain neutrality towards Saudi Arabia and Iran in the background of Iraq war. As in 2003, the U.S. invasion of Iraq has not only changed the political, religious and security dimensions of the Middle Eastern region, but also severely affected the foreign policies of other countries of the world. Initially, due to public pressure, Pakistan as one of the UN Security Council's 10 non-permanent member, clearly opposed the U.S. and UK backed resolution that sought immediate military action against Iraq. Even though the US and UK made many calls for the placement of Pakistan's military troops in Iraq, by taking the cover of GCC and OIC, Pakistan declined these requests.

However, later on this policy was reversed. In September 2003, after his meeting with US President George W. Bush, then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said that Pakistan would send its troops to Iraq as part of UN- backed force. In March 2013, according to a report, Pakistan and Iraq were signed an agreement to improve defense and security cooperation by participating in each other's military exercises. In this regard, Shah M. Jamal, Pakistan's Ambassador in Iraq asserted that Pakistan will not only train Iraq's Armed Forces, but also provide training to 35 Iraqi pilots in PAF Academy Risalpur (INP, 2013). In May 2014 two agreements were signed between Pakistan and Iraqi Government which placed an order to buy MFI-395 'Super Mushshak' trainer aircraft from Pakistan. Furthermore, in a high-level meeting, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif pledged to extend full support to meet Iraq's security needs by providing essential training to its troops.

Analysis of Pakistan' proclaimed neutral policy towards Middle East

Since there are multiple factors that contribute to the Middle Eastern politics and resultant variations in Pakistani foreign policy, we adopt an approach that tries to incorporate two core theories of IR, including realism and constructivism. We agree with the realist school of thought that security and survival are the top priorities of a state, but we also think that constructivism is one of the valuable schools of thought not only for the understanding of state's foreign policy but also for providing broader context to the foreign policy. By having main focus on the state, competition for power and unequal distribution of power among states, realism could not give the adequate analysis of the world affairs after the Cold War. Constructivism, on the other hand, focuses on the role of social world and is more useful in the post-Cold War environment. The nature of international relations is shaped and reshaped by the actions and interactions of the citizens and leaders within and outside the states (Onuf, 1989). Analyzing different factors behind Saudi Iranian rivalry and Pakistan's behavior towards different disputes in Middle East gave us insight into how Pakistan views its role in Middle East and how it defines priorities in its foreign policy? The impact of different domestic, ideological, economic, geopolitical and situational factors on Pakistan foreign policy allows us to integrate different perspectives of IR. Hill's seven expectations of foreign policy provide a consistent tool for Pakistan foreign policy analysis. The seven fundamental expectations provided by Hill regarding foreign policy include 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). Some of these seven expectations of foreign policy fall under realism, while other fall under constructivism. For example, maintenance of territorial integrity and social peace against external aggression fall under realist school of thought, while projection of identity abroad fall under the constructivist school of thought. Combining these two traditions, we present a model (see Figure 1) that attempts to explain Pakistan's policy of neutrality in the context of complexities of the Middle Eastern politics.
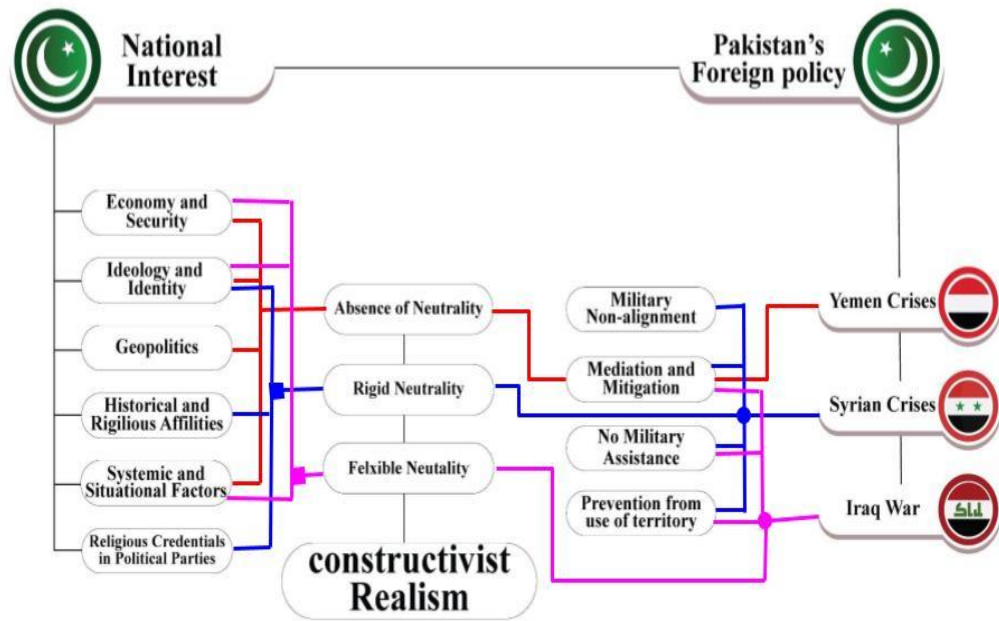
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Figure 1: Pakistan's proclaimed neutrality towards Middle East

Figure 1 indicates that the recent crises in Syria, Yemen and Iraq are the key elements behind the recent Arab Cold War, which has been intensifying rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. These ongoing Sunni-Shi'ite proxy wars in different parts of Middle East have divided this region into two camps on the basis of different political ideologies. This ideological division has significant implications for Pakistani foreign policy towards the Middle Eastern states, especially Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Based on the model presented above, we can argue that Pakistan Foreign policy is driven by the multifaceted political, economic and geo-strategic interests. By focusing on historically and theoretically pertinent aspects one might be able to analyze the making of contemporary Pakistan's engagements with Saudi Arab and Iran vis-à-vis regional conflicts. Admittedly, Pakistan's position in Yemen crisis does not reflect any apparent expression of neutrality due to the economic, security, geopolitical interests and global and regional factors. Despite Iran's deep concerns over Pakistani position in Yemen, Pakistan has failed to fulfill the obligation of neutrality. On the other hand, in Syria, due to the complexity of the issue, Pakistan faced a dilemma in conceiving its foreign policy position towards the Syrian crises. Pakistan had to adopt different approaches and policies as Syrian crisis transformed from a civil war to military conflict between numerous internal and external actors. Meanwhile, the direct involvement of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Russia, America and Turkey has shaped a diverse set of calculations for Pakistan's foreign policy decision makers. Resultantly, Pakistan has faced considerable challenges in responding to multiple events related to Syrian crisis. Pakistan had managed to adopt a strict balance and neutral foreign policy towards Syrian crisis due to multiple factors such as global and regional politics, historical and religious affinities, and religious credentials in Pakistan's political parties.

As far as the Iraq war is concerned, after the tragic events of September 11,2001, American reaction to the incident put not only Pakistan but the whole Islamic world in a dilemma regarding their reaction to the incident. A bilateral issue at its initial stage became an international crisis due to the hard positions taken by the USA and UK towards Iraq in the name of global war on terror. Following the events, Pakistan has played a significant role as a frontline state in the global war on terror against Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations in Afghanistan and Iraq (Eckholm, 2003). Despite growing reservations of many Islamic leaders and protests and demonstrations staged by tens of thousands of people

in Pakistan against the US attack on Iraq, Pakistani government faced a dangerous choice by backing the US-led Security Council resolution against Iraq. Resultantly, Pakistan had adopted a flexible neutrality in its position towards crisis in Iraq due to the lack of geographical proximity and global pressures.

Overall, the reasons behind the discrepancy between Pakistan's proclaimed foreign policy of neutrality towards Middle East and varying degree of its practical application is perfectly explained by two schools of thought in International Relations, including realism and social constructivism. Tilt in Pakistani policy in favor of Saudi Arabia perfectly aligns with Sunni-dominated identity of Pakistan. Furthermore, political ideology of political parties in Pakistan also contributes to the varying degree of the application of neutrality in Middle East. These two factors clearly demonstrate application of the theory of constructivism. Apart from this, Pakistani policy can be explained through realism. Pakistan generally follows its geopolitical and geostrategic interests. It also pays heed to regional and global power-political considerations. Like other neutral states in history, Pakistan tries its best to appease major powers in the Middle Eastern conflict. Similarly, Pakistan also wants to continue taking economic benefits from states in the opposing blocs.

Conclusion

In this paper, the nature of Pakistan's proclaimed neutral foreign policy has been explained through the analysis of a wide range of issues, events and episodes. Theoretical arguments presented in this article take into account different factors, including shared belief systems, geopolitical considerations, global political dynamics, and economic interests. The interplay of all these factors has been analyzed in the context of realism and constructivism. It was clearly demonstrated that Pakistan's neutrality policy was dependent on its geopolitical, geostrategic and economic interests. In all three crises under study, Pakistan followed different neutrality policies, ranging from no neutrality to rigid neutrality. Geopolitical and geostrategic concerns, especially balance of power and rivalry in Middle East, were paramount in Pakistan's foreign policy calculations. This evidence shows that at the broader level Pakistan's policy was consistent with expectations of realism. On the other hand, Pakistan's Sunni identity and ideologies of its parties played important role in formulating its policies in the Middle East. Officially Pakistan adopted a proclaimed policy of neutrality, but in practice it always showed tilt in favor of Saudi side mainly due to its Sunni identity. In this sense, Pakistan's policy was consistent with constructivism.

Literature on the concept of neutrality also provided important framework to analyze Pakistan's proclaimed policy of neutrality towards the Middle Eastern states. Consistent with the behavior of other neutral states in history, Pakistan generally tried to avoid entanglements in the Middle Eastern conflicts. As Finland and Austria followed policy of neutrality due to their geographical vulnerability to USSR and Warsaw Pact countries, Pakistan's policy of neutrality is also aimed at appeasing Iranian-backed bloc in Middle East. Pakistani policymakers also seemed to have taken clues from legal interpretation of neutrality. Generally, they seem to be aware of rights and obligations that come with the neutrality stance. They are also receptive to the idea that their policy of neutrality can yield important trade and economic benefits. In this respect, Pakistani policymakers aim to gain economic benefits from states on both sides of the conflict in Middle East. Finally, consistent with the behavior of other neutral states in Europe, Pakistan always tried to play the role of a buffer state between Iranian and Saudi-backed blocs in Middle East.

Despite all the above-mentioned efforts to stay neutral, we see that Pakistan followed different variations of neutrality in three different conflicts under study. This divergence in Pakistani policy can be partially explained through domestic factors, like public pressure and political ideologies of Pakistani political parties. On the other hand, it can also be explained through regional and international pressure, especially its historical ties with the United States and Saudi Arabia. As Yemen was further away and Pakistani

public was not much aware of the conflict, Pakistan, could take some risk by yielding to Saudi and American pressure to give up its neutral stance. On the other hand, public opinion in Pakistan and US setbacks in Iraq provided a context to Pakistani policymakers to pursue strict policy of neutrality during Syrian crisis. Finally, in Iraqi case, due to international pressure Pakistan could follow a policy of flexible neutrality without offending any major party in Middle East.

Recommendations

Main recommendation of this research is that overall Pakistan should not give up its policy of neutrality in Middle East. Due to the geostrategic situation in the region and Pakistan's aspirations to keep balanced approach towards US, China, and Russia, it is inevitable that Pakistan should follow this policy. At the same time, in order to deal with the day-to-day issues and specific conflicts, it is important that Pakistan should follow various types of neutral policies. Different types of neutrality, like ad hoc, de facto, de jure, as well as strict and flexible neutrality can allow different options to Pakistani policymakers to navigate through complex regional and international political and security considerations. To take full advantage of these variations in neutrality, it is imperative that our diplomats and security experts are fully trained and are aware of different legal and historical interpretations of neutrality. If Pakistan can effectively maneuver regional and international political considerations, then, like other neutral states in history, it can reap the economic, political, and security benefits and play a vital role in Middle East.

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