



Diaspora, Remittances and Dependence on Arab Countries: A Case of Pakistan

Syed Zohaib Abbas Rizvi¹, Sobia Jamil*² and Ali Imran Shaikh³

1. Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

2. Faculty of Law and International Relations, Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia.

3. International Institute of Islamic Economics, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Received: March 22, 2019

Published Online: May 26, 2020

Abstract

This paper has formulated a model by the name of DRADM i.e. Diaspora-Remittances-Arab Dependency Model while studying the literature pertinent to the modes of remittance, sectarianism and the Pakistani diaspora in the Middle-East. Pakistan is home of a large Shi'a population second only to Iran and this community regularly visits the holy shrines in Iran, Syria and Iraq forming a heartily connection with these countries. Contrarily, the Sunni Arab world hosts a huge number of Pakistani workers who send a significant part of their salaries back to Pakistan. These remittances act as a viable source of foreign exchange and help in balance of payments each year. Since the former group (Shi'a) is influenced by Iran and the latter (Sunni) by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan finds itself in a flux. In its bid to make a balance between Iran and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), how Pakistan would manage its staggering economy with headship of Islamic military coalition, is a big question mark. With the help of published secondary data from governmental and other institutions this study examines the co-relation between remittances from Arab World and sectarianism (inside Pakistan and in Middle East) and its impact on the foreign policy of Pakistan.

Keywords: Alliances, Reforms, Bailouts, Caution, Sectarianism, Diaspora and Remittances.

1. Introduction

Although Pakistan is outside the Persian Gulf, however it is directly affected (both directly and indirectly) by the politics and regional alliances in the region vis-à-vis sectarian inclination and diaspora dependent remittances. The countries of Iran, Iraq and Syria offer the Pakistan's sizable Shi'a community a deep sense of religious connectedness since most of the Shi'a holy shrines are situated in the three aforementioned countries. Pakistanis not only participate in the religious Moharram processions in all the Pakistani cities, but they also travel to the cities of Najaf, Karbala, Qum, Samarra, Damascus etc. each year as part of a global community of mourners. In fact the Arbaeen¹ in Karbala receives the highest number of people (Cockburn, 2017). Pakistan's connection with these three states is more ideological than economic.

Gulf countries of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates; Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain

host a significant number of Pakistani workers. These workers are considered as the assets of Pakistan because of remittances sent by them. It's not a co-incidence that all of these states hosting Pakistani diaspora, are part of the Islamic military alliance headed by a former Army Chief of Pakistan. The total diaspora of Pakistan, in 2018/19, is estimated around nine million. They are divided into two categories: the first category includes the Pakistani nationals living abroad with working or student visas in addition to the settled dual nationals; the second category includes people born by parents of the first category. Half of these people reside in the oil producing Gulf States.

Pakistan is considered to be a religiously moderate country in comparison to some of the other Muslim countries e.g. Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran, but it still lags behind the likes of Turkish secular tolerance and the Malaysian democratic norms. Islamabad has two fronts to deal within the Muslim world i.e. economic and religious. A more cautious rather balanced approach has been observed over the last few years to balance these two challenging or sometimes conflicting perspectives, especially after the arrival of the Arab Spring in the Middle-East. Pakistan's foreign policy has been tilted towards diplomatic verbosity avoiding a sectarian discourse. A balance in the foreign policy statements ensures a balance in relations between the two groups of Muslim states, having different sectarian identities.

This paper addresses a question about the debate between economic considerations and sectarian ease or preference in either not opting for a project or prioritizing it over all other feasible options. The infamous Iran Pakistan gas pipeline gets a mention along with the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) deal brokered by the P5+1 states² with Iran vis-à-vis nuclear disarmament and unfreezing of the Iranian assets in the United States (Spencer, 2019). Although Pakistan shares a 959 Kilometres long border with Iran and desperately needed a constant supply of natural gas from the willing and gas rich state of Iran, still it couldn't pursue the plan till date. However to cater its energy needs Islamabad has even gone for the expensive and long term project of Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India (TAPI) gas pipeline. Debates hover around the discourse of sectarian priorities, but the pre-2015 sanctions followed by the unilateral cancellation of the deal by Trump only added credibility to the portfolio of decision makers in Pakistan for not opting the pipeline project with Iran.

It is important to mention that economic initiatives in the Twenty-First Century surpass religious and sectarian adherences since the national interests of each nation come first. If Pakistan plays cautiously and avoids taking sides in the regional conflicts and thus gets scolded within the country and from outside, still it can be rigorously argued that it is putting its self-interest as the priority since the country knows about its dependency syndrome. One of the major factor is the presence of large Pakistani diaspora in Gulf States. Turkey on the other hand, being a growing export oriented economy with a negligible percentage of diaspora in these states takes a totally different approach to the regional matters. Although Ankara and Islamabad are very close and enjoy the same narrative on Kashmir, Armenia and the Kurdish rebel group PKK (Kurdish Worker's Party), still Ankara makes bold statements and leads its troops into other countries at times whereas Islamabad has adopted a policy of wait and watch courtesy of the economic dependency syndrome.

2. Literature Review:

The ideological rivalry between Tehran and Riyadh affects social inclinations in Pakistani society. Islamabad has remained cautious in taking sides officially and has uttered the rhetoric

of a balanced relationship among all the Islamic states. This balance indirectly refers to the two states Iran and KSA, heading two groups of Muslim countries based on Sunni and Shi'a sects of Islam. Saudi Arabia has gained significant importance in the eyes of the Muslim world since it hosts the two most holy sites of Mecca and Medina; two compulsory places to visit during the holy event of Hajj i.e. Muslims' pilgrimage. However the Pakistan-Saudi relationship is different. Around three million Pakistanis work in the Kingdom contributing the highest loads of remittances to Pakistan each year. United Arab Emirates (UAE) remains at second place followed by the US and UK (Siddiqui, 2019). They give around \$20 billion total remittances' inflow to Pakistan. The country is literally being run by this money: Pakistan's import-export gap is an average \$7-\$10 billion each year with imports touching \$50 billion and exports revolving around \$21-\$23 billion.

This trade deficit is mainly being filled by these expatriate Pakistanis doing tough jobs abroad and sending the hard earned foreign currency cash to their relatives in Pakistan. Even after these huge remittances, the country is prone to a short fall of \$6-\$8 billion; IMF (International Monetary Fund), Saudi oil concessions and the ambiguous Chinese loans take turns and come to save the country from bankruptcy each year. As the term goes that 'there is no free lunch in this world' Islamabad's pro-populace relief economic subsidies and political stance often get compromised by these loans and offerings. Pakistan due to the dreadful situation of its economy remains dependent on the Gulf States. The fiscal year of 2018-19 saw the government achieving more than the expected amount of remittances. Initially planned for a total remittance of \$21.2 billion, the year ended with (Siddiqui, 2019) \$21.8 billion with an extra 3 percent than the expected revenues. Around 60 to 65 percent of Pakistan's total remittances come from the Gulf States and as the Saudi economy regained strength after recovering from the fallen oil prices, pending salaries were released and better pay packages were given resulting in a subtle variation of remittances in the upwards trend.

According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the increase in remittances was due to the massive depreciation of 32 percent in the value of Pakistani rupee; sending one dollar meant an extra 32 percent in the conversion rate in Pakistan. People sent more to reap benefit. The unlawful means of sending money i.e. Hundi and Hawala were also checked upon by the government enforcing an upward trend in the use of banking channels to send money inside Pakistan (Kazmi, 2019). Therefore, the case for foreign diaspora running Pakistan's economy gets proven. Islamabad hasn't enhanced its exports nor has it developed a major oil refinery to curtail the money spent on imported fuel. This economic standstill means an ever higher reliance on the income from the diaspora living abroad; their percentage increase in salaries/profit margins in businesses would give Pakistan more leverage to deal with the budget deficit and survive another year. The country has become dependent upon the 'ifs and buts' of the monarchies of the region. The Gulf block caters around \$12-\$13 billion in revenues in terms of remittances while the Iranian block alongside Iraq neither hosts Pakistani workers (a negligible number resides there for work or religious studies) nor does it offer oil concessions and money grants. Though the countries of Iran and Iraq are home to huge oil and gas reserves, but US sanctions, oil embargos, US invasion, proxy fighting and vested interests haven't allowed the axis of resistance states to blossom economically. Pakistan is slowly but surely going in the right direction, but it needs consistencies in policies addressing massive concerns of its diaspora living mainly in the Gulf States.

Recent developments in the Middle-East have given Pakistan a hope of mitigating influence on its regional de-facto foreign policy. After attacks on the Saudi oil fields from missiles fired

from the Houthis' controlled terrain of Yemen, Riyadh expected the United States to avenge the economic loss and geographic insult by going hard on Iran, the force behind the Houthis. But it didn't happen making the Saudis realize to sort out the differences by themselves instead of relying on the super power. Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS), the Crown prince of KSA, toed the line of the Emirati Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Zayed (MBZ); the latter has taken UAE out of the box of expectations and has struck a deal with Tehran in Yemen (Hubbard & Fassihi, 2019). UAE getting closer to Iran meant a green signal for Pakistan to not worry much about the theological differences in foreign relations.

To put an icing on the cake, Riyadh sought help from Islamabad (along with Baghdad) to act as a mediator between the Kingdom and the regime in Tehran. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani addressed the United Nations General Assembly in 2019 and specified the Arab nations in the Persian Gulf about knowing their neighbours; "It's the Islamic Republic of Iran who is your neighbour," he said. "At the day of an event, you and us will be alone. We are each other's neighbours, not America." This bridging of divide with Pakistan being the mediator asks for a genuine effort by the Pakistani authorities. Prime Minister Imran Khan met President Rouhani during the same General Assembly's meeting discussing the potential road map of the mediation. Although details are not fully out and Riyadh maintains the rhetoric of Pakistan and Iraq asking for mediation by themselves, still the air has remained filled with a scent of betterment. Pakistan's interests are directly proportional to the outcome of these talks even the due process would bear fruits for Islamabad.

The killing of Major General Qasim Suleimani, the Chief of the Irani Quds Force by the American drones in Baghdad has halted the process of reconciliation; Iran retaliated after warnings of revenge hitting two American installations in Baghdad with dozens of missiles causing physical and mental injuries to the US soldiers (Suleimani, Entous, & Osnos, 2020: 12). But things have gradually been getting back on track after a restraint by either sides de-escalating the tensions in the region. Again, Islamabad adopted a cautious approach since the dependency syndrome entailed the presence of more than half a million Pakistanis residing in the United States in addition to the military and economic assistance provided by the super power to the dependent nation. In this case, all the three parties i.e. the most powerful Iranian General, the most precise drone system of the United States being functioned on a President's whim and the reticent Saudi policy circles, pushed Pakistan to take an ever balanced approach i.e. lip serving to verbose statements without intent and action. This act was widely considered as a sabotage manoeuvre by the United States on the Israeli pretext halting every effort of reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Since General Suleimani was the best military strategist in Iran, so he was tasked to represent Iran and carry its messages to Saudi Arabia in the mediating state of Iraq. He was supposed to meet Adil Abdul Mahdi, the Prime Minister of Iraq on the same morning he was killed by the American missiles. Situation in the Middle-East could have gone out of control with millions of Iranians attending the funeral processions (Moini, 2019) of the martyred General; even the Iraqi Prime Minister attended the funeral held in Baghdad. Qatar, a small Arab state that not only hosts over one hundred thousand Pakistani workers but also sells Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to the South Asian states, has been victim to aerial and diplomatic blockades by the Gulf States particularly from KSA and UAE. But this realignment has tilted Qatar toward its Persian Gulf's neighbour Iran. Muhammad Bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani, the Qatari Foreign Minister immediately flew to Tehran after the killing of Suleimani asking for calm and restraint. His Emirati counter-part Anwar Gargash tweeted for rational engagement. "Wisdom

and balance must prevail”, he wrote. Sensing the Iranian mood and capability to strike hard in its sphere of influence countries i.e. Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, MBS sent his brother and the Deputy Defence Minister Khalid Bin Salman to Washington asking for normalcy and restraint (Sengupta, 2020).

Though the Middle-Eastern politics does involve proxy fighting and bloodbaths, still there is room for negotiation brokered by the states being geographically present in the region, relate them the far away super power of America. Pakistan is the most important non-Arab player in the process and outcome of the Tehran-Riyadh rivalry over supremacy in the Middle-Eastern affairs. Apart from remittances, Islamabad is keen to find a partner other than China willing to contribute to the foreign direct investments’ (FDI) portfolio of Pakistan. MBS responded positively while to the KSA Visiting the ever dependable and dependent Pakistan, releasing 2,000 prisoners in a jiffy and most importantly pledging \$20 billion of investments in different sectors as a gesture of goodwill (Hincks, 2019).

This magnanimous pledge also included the \$8 billion oil refinery in the talk of the town port city of Gwadar. This establishment shall reduce the oil import bill of Pakistan to an average of \$4-\$6 billion each year giving the country leverage over its dependency on the remittances being sent by the expatriate Pakistanis. But Saudi money didn’t come unconditionally. In an attempt to address the discourse of Islamophobia and its sectarian glimpses in the Muslim world, the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad planned to host a 3 days’ summit in Kuala Lumpur with Iranian President Rouhani, Turkish President Erdogan and Prime Minister Imran Khan as the three prominent guest speakers alongside the host Mahathir and the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad. This summit was seen as a challenge to the Jeddah based Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). KSA, not only, Riyadh did not attend alongside UAE and Egypt, but it forced Pakistan to call it off at the last minute.

What Pakistan’s foreign ministry claimed to be an act of uniting the Ummah was equated with the Saudi threat of expelling³ four million Pakistanis from the Kingdom? Turkish President Erdogan harshly criticized the Saudi economic pressure tactics (Yousaf, 2019) in subduing Islamabad’s desire to play a lead role among the countries hopeful to resolve global Muslim issues like poverty and Islamophobia. KSA Kingdom also conditioned the participation in the summit to a withdrawal of the Saudi money parked in the account of the State Bank of Pakistan for balance of trade. Although the KSA denied these accusations, but everyone knows about the choices a desperate borrower has against a shrewd lender. Pakistan’s eagerness to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia in addition to being a part of this new Muslim bloc does talk high of the country’s economic and sectarian troubles (Hasan, 2020). When it didn’t receive support from UAE and KSA amid Indian revocation of the article 370 stripping Kashmir of its special status followed by curfew, Muslims throughout the world started calling OIC a dead horse. It was natural for Pakistan to look for alternates: Turkey and Malaysia openly supported Pakistan along with the Iranian Parliament which also condemning the Indian act; keeping these circumstances this summit became a ray of hope for Pakistan since there were countries not supporting the foreign policy of Islamabad.

However these countries weren’t funding the cash starved nation, therefore Imran Khan like many of his predecessors played cautiously and didn’t risk the fury of its historical and potential investors. Another reason for this uncompromising Saudi attitude is the historical roots of leadership in the Muslim world. Apart from the tiny state of Qatar, the probable new bloc includes: Turkey (the successor of the Ottoman Empire); Iran (successor to the Shia Safavid

Empire); Malaysians are non-Arabs and primarily Malay and Han Chinese. Adding Pakistan to the elite list means the inclusion of the Indus legacy. In order to withhold the leadership position against the emerging non-Arab Muslim countries, KSA could use the economic or sectarian card and offer more than demanded for allegiance. Pakistan may isolate itself from the new bloc of nations in exchange for a big chunk of Saudi loans and investments, but this policy seems myopic and unadvised in the contemporary world of globalization. UAE's Dubai port is supposed to be a competitor once Gwadar starts functioning at the full capacity, still the former has invested in the future city of pearl. If sanity prevails, peace would be followed in the Muslim world with Pakistan getting the economic benefit from its huge diaspora in addition to a sectarian tolerance.

3. Data and Methods

Since this is a study on remittance and economic opportunities, the literature studied involved numbers and graphs, so a government certified data was consulted i.e. published secondary data from World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) was consulted. A descriptive approach was used to analyse the economic indicators of the Pakistani economy vis-à-vis its reliance on the Arab worlds' leverage. Pakistan's foreign policy is a dependent variable; its sectarian discourse, military alignment and relationships with the Muslim nations act as independent variables. Chinese investments in the CPEC act as intervening variables since they have indirectly involved Iran and KSA to the game i.e. the Chinese offer of a similar package to the former and the latter's interest in establishing an oil refinery in Gwadar. A new framework has been formed with the name of DRADM i.e. Diaspora-Remittances-Arab Dependency Model. It involves a correlation between: The Pakistani diaspora in the Arab world and their remittances in Dinars and Riyals; the dependence of the Pakistani foreign policy on the economic assistance provided by the Arab countries especially KSA and UAE, two countries hosting the highest number of Pakistani diaspora. The model is incomplete without a reference to the concerns of sectarianism. Countries like Iran, Syria and Iraq cannot afford foreign workers, but they host a continuous flow of Shia pilgrims (Pakistanis in this case) to the holy shrines in the three countries. Not only do they earn revenues, but their foreign policies vis-à-vis sectarian inclinations directly affect the Pakistani society. Thus the economic dependency model evolves into a sectarian-economic Muslim relationship balancing model. A qualitative approach has been used to study the factors of relationship of this model.

4. Discussions and Findings

This paper now discusses in depth the bindings and fall outs of Pakistan's foreign policy's dependency on the oil and cash rich Arab world. The best Pakistan could present was the service of its powerful military; however the controversial Arabs' sponsored military alliance led to the road of sectarianism.

4.1. Islamic Military Alliance

Pakistan acted wisely after the creation of the Islamic Military Alliance of 41 Muslim nations made in the name of fighting terrorism. The two major postulates of this alliance were: it didn't have Iran, Iraq and Syria (Sonobar, 2018); the three countries weren't invited in the 2017 IMCTC (Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition) meeting. Pakistan's case to the IMCTC became even more sensitive when its former Army Chief General Raheel Sharif was installed

as the head of the alliance; Iran and other like-minded countries tried to convince Pakistan of staying neutral (Ahmad, 2017) and decline the Saudi offer to head the biased alliance. Pakistan shares border with Iran and the latter isn't included in the alliance headed by the former's General and financed by the anti-Iran Kingdom. Iranian authorities meeting with the Pakistani officials apart from bold and clear statements showed the significance of this Saudi move. When the Pakistani Senate was informed about sending 1,000 troops to Riyadh in 2018, it was shocked since the 2015 Yemen Resolution halted any attempt to send Pakistan's Army for the Kingdom's defence plans. ISPR (Inter-Services Public Relations) is a media outlet of Pakistan's Army: it issued a press release that ensured the participation of these 1,000 troops being limited to training missions only; crossing the Saudi borders into Yemen wasn't a job description of these men. Later, Khawaja Asif, then Minister for Defence, told the Pakistani Parliament that these security measures would solely remain internal to the Saudi security ("Pakistani troops in", 2018).

Iranian Air Chief Shahsafi immediately flew to Pakistan and met with the Army and Air Chiefs of Pakistan, a meeting whose discussion still remained secret. Surely Pakistan is trying hard to balance the two powers. Iran's concerns are genuine (Winter, 2017) since an alliance of 41 states leaving Tehran the former out of it means having states of much lesser value being included in the complex group. The curious and perhaps the hardest case for Pakistan is to persuade KSA under MBS to invite Iran as the 42nd state in the alliance. If this supposition comes true, every hypothesis regarding Middle-Eastern inferno on sectarian inclinations could turn into a null hypothesis. A worrying factor is the definition of 'counter-terrorism': what MBS terms terrorism might be different from the Oxford dictionary's definition. If Iran is a terrorist state, the definition could be 'a state not accepting MBS rule and the interests of the Kingdom in Middle-East in general and Yemen in particular'. Iranian support of the Houthi rebels in the south of KSA followed by the misguided sporadic attacks on the Saudi soil created a vacuum of trust in relationships. In such a hostile environment where the egos of the two countries led to a 'zero attendance of the Iranian pilgrims to Mecca in 2016' (Vahdat, 2016), Pakistan is sandwiched between two competing powers and it cannot afford to take side of any.

Comparing Pakistan with Egypt, one can deduce a valid factor facilitating the two states to act differently. Cairo's Muslim population is 99 percent Sunni allowing it to follow a Saudi line of thought and in return take billions of dollars support. Egypt is a strong Army backed nation, but the country has compromised with Israel after the controversial and unpopular Camp David Accords. MBS is no different than Gen Sisi⁴ and the two could count on a closer military cum sectarian alliance. The case of Pakistan is totally different: it hosts a Shi'a population of around 15-20 percent making it vulnerable to Middle-Eastern chaos and conflicts. Balancing is the only way out; siding with any one power cannot serve its nations. That's why unlike Pakistan's bold stance on Kashmir vis-à-vis India, the former adopts a cautious approach when it comes to the Iran-Saudi power politics in the Middle-East.

4.2. Sectarianism and Economics

Contemporary Pakistan is still home to extremist elements ready to eliminate and excommunicate or at least less tolerable to others' perspective. However the Pak-Iran economic relationship vis-à-vis the proposed pipeline and official cross border trade, is more dependent upon the US sanctions on Iran than a Saudi pressure to push Pakistan rely on TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline) and disclosed Iran. Even the weakest and unpopular democratic experiences in Pakistan have served the nation. The 2015 Yemen

Resolution was preceded by a round of talks by different political figures belonging to different parties in the Parliament; they didn't allow Pakistan to get militarily involved in another conflict that it didn't belong to; it was a Saudi conflict and the Pakistani Army's involvement in Yemen meant confronting Iran, a sectarian risk that Pakistan could hardly afford, no matter how many dollars Riyadh could have paid as compensation.

A dictatorship during such a tricky situation could have done the same, but there was no guarantee; President Musharraf's 'yes' to the US charter of demands after 9'11 preceded by President Haq's one-dimensional policy during the Soviet invasion of Kabul are past memories of a nation's fate's decisions taken without parliamentary consultation. This explanation implies to the probability of state's preferences and priorities over economic and ideological alliances. Frequent military coups in Pakistan led to the weakening of the democratic roots in the country, but the word praetorian (Haleem, 2003) was started to be used only when the military started hitting the Tribal Agencies of Pakistan suspected of hosting militants considered a threat by the US. The infamous rhetoric was like killing your own people at the behest of a super power in a country divided on sectarian and ethnic lines. Things gradually changed as people started to see the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq with different perspectives and with democracy reinstalled, new point of views emerged.

Pakistan may pursue the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project once US lifts the sanctions being re-imposed by President Trump after the famous 2015 P5+1 JCPOA. Islamabad couldn't do much during the three and half years' time it had to negotiate with Iran, since the country's major focus has been CPEC after 2014. Pakistan's economic clout doesn't permit it to ask for a US concession vis-à-vis Iranian gas pipeline; China and India have used this concession, but the US attack to kill Iranian General haven't sent the right signal to the countries of Pakistan's stature. Pakistan has external threats to its sectarian peace: the atmosphere has remained volatile by the funding and training of sectarian organizations by the Indian establishment; groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are funded by the Indian agencies to foment sectarian trouble in Pakistan by targeting the vulnerable armless minorities (M. N. Shah, 2014: 442). Jeff Colgan⁵ believes that Pakistan has done well in "resisting the Saudi move to use sectarianism for regional alignments" (2015). It is a big attempt by a Republican Sunni state to avoid sectarianism in the country and region.

4.3. Western Dependency versus Arab Dependency

Pakistanis living in the United Kingdom have utilized the opportunity to advance their political careers inside Pakistan (Mirza, 2018) either in forced or self-imposed exile. Since the British Empire ruled the territories of contemporary Pakistan, Bangladesh and India till 1947, the stakes and social interaction of the former empire with the land of sub-continent have been on the higher side; around 2.4 million people reside in the UK originating from Pakistan and India. Pakistanis residing in the European and Western states enjoy much more political freedom and human rights as compared to their brethren working in the Gulf monarchies. Ishrat Hussain, former Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, calls this 'brain drain'⁶ a 'brain circulation' of Pakistanis (Husain, 2016) getting exposure to foreign/ multi-cultures with majority of the top universities' graduates choosing Pakistan as their jobs'/ businesses' country. Remittances contribute to around 7 percent of Pakistan's GDP (Gross Domestic Product); Islamabad has witnessed a double digit growth in its foreign remittances which is a serious breakthrough to fund its balance of payments each year, but it has made the country vulnerable to skirmishes/ tensions in the Gulf region. Pakistan has perhaps taken its diasporic blessing for granted: the

Pakistani community in Washington D.C., welcomed Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, as a rock star (Bangash, 2019); they need to see a change in Pakistan; they want to see a Pakistan laying down the foundations of equating with the West and upgrading its standards of operations; they don't want to be used as earning maniacs working tirelessly and filling up the state coffins to let it live another day of indifference and political reticence. Therefore, the Western dependency asks fewer questions to the foreign policy of Pakistan than the Arab dependency model.

5. Conclusion

Since Pakistan's population perfectly represents the world's sectarian Muslims' percentile i.e. 15 to 20 percent Shi'a and 80 to 85 percent Sunni (sub-sects are counted under the two broad branches), it could ill afford to completely side by the Gulf nations. A country like Egypt with negligible Shi'a population could have afforded such a luxury, but Pakistan has its limitations. For this very reason, Pakistan hasn't openly been involved in the Saudi initiatives vis-à-vis ground troops controlling its borders with Yemen. The countries of Iran, Iraq and Syria are home to holy shrines. Majority of the pilgrims from Pakistan to these countries are Shi'a Muslims. Nonetheless a government too close to KSA and hostile to Iran would be inviting trouble inside Pakistan since it would give Iran an excuse to foment protests on sectarian grounds. But the policy makers of Pakistan have so far successfully maintained a balance between the two sides. This Iranian led pool of countries don't offer any sort of remittances to Pakistan, so economically, Islamabad remains dependent on Saudi oil concessions and grants. Arab Spring made Pakistan a spectator of events as the revolution remained limited to the Arab world. Though extremism was enhanced in countries like Libya, Syria and Yemen, but Pakistan's economic conditioning didn't suffer courtesy of the revolution's failure to enter the oil rich Gulf monarchies.

The government of Pakistan should try to maintain a balance between the two blocks of the Muslim world. At the moment, it isn't doing a bad job. People argue over Pakistan's inclinations towards the Arab world, but the country has still remained neutral during the test case of Yemen. Addressing the concerns of the minorities should be made a priority; its democratic process is weak, but a hope for debates and policy making in the parliament keeps peoples' hopes alive for a better future for Pakistan. Peace efforts by the Pakistani government to broker a deal with Iran and KSA signifies the value and standing of Pakistan among the Muslim nations. These missions would ensure better prospects for peace at home.

With all these foreign policy measures, Pakistan is required to rehabilitate its economy both in the agriculture and industrial sectors, to minimize its dependence on the remittances. Moreover the world politics is uncertain and can shape in either way. Therefore there should be solid planning to deal with economic and social challenges owing to large number of diaspora returning from Gulf States since they don't offer nationality to the expatriates. It's a harsh reality that economies of KSA and UAE are losing petro-dollar and their own youth is replacing foreign working force. Any adventure or accident or conflict in gulf may escalate to a full-fledged war and may cause the situation of Gulf War I, in 1990, and US attack on Libya and Iraq in Twenty-first Century, when lot of Pakistanis had to come back, losing all their livelihood. In such circumstance dependence on remittances may result in collapse of already staggering economy.

References

- Ahmad, N. (2017). Pakistan and the Saudi-led anti-terror coalition: Regional implications for the appointment of Gen. Raheel. Retrieved from Al-Jazeera website: <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2017/05/pakistan-saudi-led-anti-terror-coalitionregional-implications-appointment-gen-raheel-170517100721721.html>
- Bangash, Y. K. (2019). Pakistan and its Diaspora. Retrieved from The News International website: <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/pakistan-diaspora/>
- Cockburn, P. (2017). Arbaeen Millions of Shia Muslims take part in world's greatest pilgrimage as Isis is finally defeated. Retrieved from The Independent: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/arbaeen-pilgrimage-kerbala-shia-isis-defeat-muslims-thousands-killed-middle-east-iraq-najaf-a8046621.html>
- Colgan, J. (2015). How sectarianism shapes Yemen's war. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/04/13/how-sectarianism-shapes-yemens-war/>
- Dawn. (2018). *Pakistani troops in Saudi providing internal security, Khawaja Asif tells NA*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1394177/pakistani-troops-in-saudi-providing-internal-security-khawaja-asif-tells-na>
- Haleem, I. (2003). Ethnic and sectarian violence and the propensity towards praetorianism in Pakistan. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 24, pp. 463-477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0143659032000084410>
- Hasan, S. (2020). Why is Pakistan keen on mediating between Iran and Saudi Arabia? *Trtworld*. Retrieved from <https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/why-is-pakistan-keen-on-mediating-between-iran-and-saudi-arabia-32961>
- Hincks, J. (2019). Why Saudi Arabia Is Investing \$20 Billion in Pakistan. *Time*. Retrieved from <https://time.com/5531724/saudi-arabia-pakistan-mbs-imran-khan/>
- Hubbard, B., & Fassihi, F. (2019). Saudi Arabia and Iran Make Quiet Openings to Head Off War. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/04/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-iran-talks.html>
- Husain, I. (2016). The Pakistani Diaspora: Strengthening linkages between host and home. *Lahore School of Economics*, 1-6.
- Kazmi, S. K. H. (2019). Remittances climb to 12pc in first 8 months of fiscal year. Retrieved from *Pakistan & Gulf Economist*: <http://www.pakistaneconomist.com/2019/03/25/remittances-climb-to-12pc-in-first-8-months-of-fiscal-year/>
- Mirza, F. (2018). Non-Fiction: Detailing the Diaspora. Retrieved from Dawn: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1398840>
- Moini, Q. A. (2019). Portents of an Assassination. *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1527700>
- Sengupta, K. (2020). The reason Qassem Soleimani was in Baghdad shows how complex the Iran crisis is. *The Independent*.
- Shah, M. N. (2014). Evolution of Sectarianism in Pakistan: A Threat to the State and Society. *South Asian Studies A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 29(2), 441-459.
- Siddiqui, S. (2019). Remittances surpass target, stand at \$21. Retrieved from The Express Tribune: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2010563/2-remittances-surpass-target-stand-21-8b-fy19/>
- Sonobar, S. (2018). Pakistan and the Islamic Military Coalition: Need to Balance Interests. *South Asian Voices*. Retrieved from <https://southasianvoices.org/islamic-military->

- [coalition-pakistan/](#)
- Spencer, S. H. (2019). Obama Didn't Give Iran "150 Billion in Cash." Retrieved from Factcheck.org: <https://www.factcheck.org/2019/03/obama-didnt-give-iran-150-billion-in-cash/>
- Suleimani, Q., Entous, B. A., & Osnos, E. (2020). Qassem Suleimani and How Nations Decide to Kill. *The New Yorker*, 1-14.
- Vahdat, A. (2016). Hajj 2016: Iran will not send pilgrims to Saudi Arabia due to 'incompetence' that caused fatal stampede last year. Retrieved from The Independent: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/hajj-2016-iran-will-not-send-pilgrims-to-saudi-arabia-due-to-incompetence-that-caused-fatal-stampede-a7027011.html>
- Winter, C. (2017). Saudi-led Islamic military alliance: counterterrorism or counter Iran? Retrieved from DW: <https://www.dw.com/en/saudi-led-islamic-military-alliance-counterterrorism-or-counter-iran/a-41538781>
- Yousaf, K. (2019). Saudi foreign minister to arrive on charm offensive. *The Express Tribune*.

Notes:

¹ *Arbaeen* literally means forty. The fortieth of Imam is a Shi'a Muslim religious observance that occurs forty days after the Day of Ashura, 10th of Muharram, when Imam Hussain and his followers were martyred in Karbala, Iraq.

² The five permanent members of the UN Security Council are referred as the P5; namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; plus Germany.

³ Figure of four million is disputed: some statistics claim a figure of 2.6 million; others refer to 3 million.

⁴ General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is the head of Egyptian Army and state; he had overthrown President Muhammad Morsi after the controversial yet popular protests. <https://voiceofeast.net/2016/03/14/islamic-military-alliance-options-for-pakistan/>

⁵ Jeff Colgan is an Assistant Professor working in the Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies. "*Petro-Aggression: when oil causes war*" is the master piece authored by him.

⁶ Brain Drain refers to a country's most educated lot choosing a foreign country for employment.