



Pakistan and Iran Relations A Research on Cultural Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan and Iran disseminate deep-rooted intra-cultural and religious bonds that have especially created bilateral connections since the birth of Pakistan. The influence of Shi'a Islam in Iran and a substantial Shi'a minority in Pakistan anchored in joint Islamic roots, both countries exhibit strong connections in the Muslim world. These bonds are different and improved by a long-standing cultural conversation embedded in the Urdu and Persian languages, literary works, art, and Sufism, which historically linked the territories long before modern borders appeared. Likewise, Persian served as the administrative language in the Indian subcontinent for centuries, having a long-lasting influence on Urdu poetry and intellectual traditions in Pakistan. Similarly, conveyed religious remembrances, such as Ashura, and cultural segments, like Nowruz, are celebrated and respected in both societies. Cultural diplomacy and religious affinity continue to promote people-to-people relations, academic alliances, and regional partnerships. It explores how people-to-people exchanges, cultural festivals, and exchanges contribute to the promotion of reciprocal wisdom and benevolence between these two countries. The paper discusses the cultural dimensions creating a bridge of diplomacy and religious roots for regional collaborations between both countries, interpreting the historical growth and modern significance in regional collaborations and identity formation. This paper employs descriptive methods based on secondary data which pivotal for the proposed study. This study aims to shed light on the definite relations through rigorous literature analysis and diving into reliable and authentic sources such as international journals, books, diplomatic reports, national, and international newspapers.

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1. Introduction

The relationship between countries is a dynamic interplay of cultural, political, and historical aspects that construct diplomatic exchanges and regional ties. Amongst the multiplex international connections, the relationship between Pakistan and Iran stands as a glamorous and multifaceted subject within the domain of international relations. These two countries, situated in a region indicated by cultural diversity and political volatility, have communicated a historical inheritance that covers centuries. Their interchanges, rooted in reciprocal interests, cultural associations, and mutual challenges, hold giant significance not only for bilateral interests but also for regional resilience cooperation, and stability (Basit, 2018). Pakistan and Iran, as neighboring polities, convey deep-rooted historical, political, cultural, and geographical linkages. These connections inflate beyond the domain of diplomacy and politics, enclosing trade, religion, and people-to-people exchanges (Mostofi Sharabiyani & Borzooei, 2024). As two pivotal countries in South Asia and the Middle East, their affinity has detected periods of collaboration, shared challenges, and ripening dynamics. These phases reminisce a combination of occasional

divergences and mutual interests, showcasing the complex nature of their diplomatic connections (Ranjan & Baba, 2023b).

The intricate web of international relations continuously unwinds, helmed by geopolitical changes, historical legacies, and cultural exchanges. Amongst the labyrinth of international diplomacy, the relationship between Pakistan and Iran stands as a fascinating subject meriting wide exploration. These two neighboring countries, positioned at the junctions of the Middle East and South Asia, convey a rich history characterized by joint interests, occasional challenges, and cultural affinities. The bilateral connection between Iran and Pakistan is pieced by multifaceted layers of attention. These coatings enclose economic collaborations, political dialogues, vibrant cultural exchanges, and religious ties (Shah, 2023). Both countries have spanned a path that knots strategic interests with shared religious and cultural norms. Their connection has witnessed periods of collaboration, cooperation, and an era of suspense, reminiscing the complex tapestry of diplomatic relations (Shah, 2023). The historical context of Pakistan-Iran connections is deeply rooted in the rich heritage of cultural and religious instances of both countries (Khatti, Rasool, & Shaikh, 2022). For instance centuries of shared history, scholars, including the outpour of thoughts, and vendors across their borders, have developed lasting ties. These connections soaked in the legacy of bygone civilizations and empires, have contributed to the special bond between Pakistan and Iran. Over the years, the cultural and political terrain of the region has witnessed frocks and realignments. The Iranian Revolution of 1979, the dynamics of the Cold War and the fascinating geopolitical method in South Asia and the Middle East have all played climactic roles in shaping the shapes of Pakistan-Iran ties.

2. Literature Review

According to the study of Montazeran and Mumtaz (2004) explores the potential for collaboration between Iran and Pakistan in order to foster stability and peace in the region. The investigation discussed diplomatic, economic, or security initiatives that both countries could embark on to address regional challenges and conflicts. This collaboration could have an essence for the broader geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East and South Asia. The study of Rasool, Syed and Ahmed (2023) has roots to bilateral relations of Pak-Iran, focusing only on historical perspectives. The results expose the historical trajectories that have described the connection, highlighting shared cultural, religious, and regional factors that have contributed to its development. In this way, the thorny terrain of international relations continually develops through the shift from non-alignment to collaborative regional engagements shaped by historical stances. However, the findings of the study by Rafique, Maqsood and Naureen (2014) highlight focal points regarding the enduring relationship between Pakistan and Iran. It highlighted the significance of bilateral connection, economic, strategic, spanning cultural and socio-political dimensions. Besides, it accentuated Islam as a unifying sway. Mehmood (2023) investigates the regional geopolitics of Pakistan-Iran relations and the implications of security concerns. The study unveils how mutual stake interests, intercommunicated challenges, and regional geopolitical dynamics coax the evolving connection between the two countries.

The specific findings delve into the impact of CPEC on economic relations, investment, and trade between these two countries. Besides, the impact of cross-border trade on economic relations between Pakistan and Iran is the focus of Ali, Sami and Mahesar (2025). The study highlights the punch of trade as a mechanism for revealing the multifaceted nature of the interactions, upgrading economic interdependence. The Middle East significantly influences Pakistan and South Asia through cultural transmission, propelled by religio-cultural dynamics. Pakistan's historical relations with Iran spin around a profound high culture ingrained in the Persian language. Iran was the first country to acknowledge Pakistan in 1947, reciprocated when Pakistan swiftly recognized Iran's new government in 1979 following the Islamic revolution. However, these relations underwent a cooling era during Iran's international economic sanctions. Recently a notable aspect was the emergence of polar security perceptions between the two nations. Iran's concern emanates from the security implications of Pakistan's relations with Saudi Arabia, while Pakistan is uneasy about the evolving India-Iran relations potentially surrounding it strategically, as highlighted (Tehsin, 2017). Likewise, the relative analysis of human rights is concerned with Raza (2020), analyzing these nuanced influences of bilateral relationships. Henceforth, the focal point of the study of Basit (2018) is to explore the religious odyssey and transborder solidarity among Shia Muslims in the region ties, aiming to spotlight the religious role in shaping it strong beyond far-reaching. It explores the implications of foreign direct

investment on economic ties between Pakistan and Iran. The objective is to uncover the role of investment in stimulating bilateral relations and influencing economic cooperation. Besides, the research study (Yosofvand, 2025) delves into the case of minority rights security, using the case of the Baloch community in Iran and Pakistan. The results highlight the opposing approaches of both countries toward minority privileges. While Pakistan has made efforts to provide greater liberation to the Baloch minority, the study reveals that Iran's policy has been more assimilationists. Subsequently, the analysis of Shah (2023) examines the potential of tourism promotion to fortify cultural ties between these countries and enrich new ground in the region. The findings demonstrate that the tourism sector serves as a potent conduit for people-to-people interactions and cultural exchange. The results emphasize the transformative power of shared tourism experiences in enhancing cross-cultural cognition and generating positive sentiment, thus contributing to the overall enhancement of the bilateral connection.

The study Ismail and Kasim (2023) delves into the bilateral relations between Turkey and Pakistan. The study explores the opportunities and challenges that characterize this relationship. The study shed light on the intricate dynamics between the two countries, examining economic, political, and strategic aspects through an overall examination. The authors contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving Pakistan-Turkey bilateral relations by identifying obstacles and prospects. However, the analysis of Karim (2023) bases on the Pakistan-Iran relationship, evolving dynamics in the context of transforming regional and strategic interests and domestic security. The study examines the factors influencing the relationship's transformation, considering shifts in geopolitical priorities and domestic concerns (Rasool). It provides insights into how two countries navigate their intricate ties by analyzing the interplay between security interests and strategic cooperation. In a similar aspect, the research of Ranjan and Baba (2023a) investigates introductory relations between South Asia and the Middle East. Besides, the study lays the groundwork for comprehending the cooperation, intricate interactions, and challenges between the two regions. The authors set the stage for a comprehensive reevaluation by examining historical and contemporary linkages and the geopolitical, cultural, and economic ties that shape Middle South Asia-East relations.

2.1. Research Questions

The lacuna of the investigation catch gaps in the present literature studies above, backing up the findings and outcomes fortifies highlighting research questions based on the defined stances. It follows the heading questions for the present study.

1. To explore the cultural aspects between Pakistan and Iran
2. To highlight the religious links between Pakistan and Iran

2.2. Problem Statement

Pakistan and Iran transmit deep-rooted cultural, political, historical, and geographical relations that have traversed centuries. These ties develop beyond geo-strategic diplomacy and religion, surrounding trade, politics, and people-to-people communications. The connection has witnessed generations of collaboration, intercommunicated challenges, ripening dynamics, darting combinations of ordinary interests, and occasional divergences. The varied nature of Pakistan-Iran junctions continues to shape the diplomatic landscape of both countries and their concentration in the wider South Asia and Middle East. The bilateral relationship between Iran and Pakistan is a significant and elaborate case within the domain of international relations. Despite multiple research investigations exploring multifarious facets of the relations, there remain notable problems/gaps in the literature that merit deeper research study (Rasool *et al.*, 2023). The proposed research study aims to explore these gaps by delving into the cultural and political dimensions of Pakistan-Iran relations. The intricacies and nuances of the connection have far-reaching impacts on diplomacy, regional stability, and cultural interaction. However, the existing literature has not thoroughly discourse the multifaceted interplay between the political and cultural facets, vamoosing crucial gaps and problems in comprehending the dynamics of this relationship.

As an outcome, some researchers have delved into the international perspectives of security, geostrategic nuances, regional cases, and bilateral ties within the context of the superpower order is focused (Montazeran & Mumtaz, 2004; Rafique, Maqsood, & Naureen, 2014; Ranjan & Baba, 2023a; Tehsin, 2017). Besides, historical collaborations with states, accords and agreements, cultural, religious, and ethical soft cases, economic cooperation, and people-to-

people linkages have been the primary focus of other researchers, including (Karim, 2023; Rasool; Raza, 2020; Shah, 2023). However, what has remained relatively unexplored is the significant convergence of political and cultural dimensions within the framework of Pakistan-Iran relations. Therefore, the present study highlights this gap by scrutinizing the hitherto underexplored political and cultural dimensions. By delving, this study aims to equip a fresh perspective on the friendly facets of international relations within political and cultural stances.

3. Research Methodology

Methodology selection is a vital facet of research (Rasool *et al.*, 2023), with aspects like research objectives, available resources, and the thorough domain. Researchers frequently decide between qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, aligning with the research context. Descriptive research, however, applies recording and observing data to accumulate an in-depth interpretation of a specific phenomenon, employing techniques such as international relations dimensions (Hoque & Hopper, 1997). It serves as a foundational step, proposing insights into historical and cultural dimensions, as noted by Rafique, Maqsood and Naureen (2014). Similarly, Rasool *et al.* (2024) performed a study on the impact of Pak-Afghan bilateral trade on Afghanistan's economic growth, providing a descriptive analysis that edifies the connection between trade activities and Afghanistan's economic development. In the meantime, Qadir *et al.* (2019) applied descriptive technique in the domain of IR delineated on secondary data sources to investigate the dimensions of Pak-Iran ties and strategies accordingly. In this way, Sandano, Shah and Shaikh (2019) underscored China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a significant step toward shared globalization investigating the geographical politics, highlighting its capability to foster economic relations and global collaboration. For a while, Raza (2020) concentrated on evolving Pakistan-Iran relations in the international arena, employing descriptive research methods.

In consequence, scholars, as mentioned above (Montazeran & Mumtaz, 2004; Raza, 2020; Sandano, Shah, & Shaikh, 2019), extensively examined various political dimensions, variables, factors, and dynamic aspects of international relations operating descriptive research methods. Secondly, the investigators in Table 2.1, as previously mentioned (Hoque & Hopper, 1997; Qadir *et al.*, 2019; Rasool, Syed, & Ahmed, 2023), delved into cultural dimensions, including variables such as religion, language, cultural diplomacy, diaspora factors, and historical-geographical dimensions, employing descriptive research methods. It has been demonstrated that descriptive research methods in the discipline of international relations are both suitable and applicable when dealing with multinational bilateral relations within regions and among states. The objective of this research is to investigate the political and cultural dimensions of Pak-Iran relations, which have been overlooked, neglected, or somewhat denied (Khatti, Rasool, & Shaikh, 2022; Rasool, Syed, & Ahmed, 2023). To interpret the relevant literature mentioned above, the researcher has decided to conduct the proposed dissertation based on descriptive research employing secondary data. This study aims to shed light on the definite relations through rigorous literature analysis and delving into reliable and authentic sources such as international journals, books, diplomatic reports, national, and international newspapers.

4. Research Findings

These objectives explores the cultural dimensions of Pakistan-Iran relations, shedding light on their cultural affinities and religious ties. Besides, it explores the pivotal role played by dynamic relationships through cultural diplomacy.

4.1. Cultural Affinities

The deviation of cultural dimensions in Pakistan-Iran ties cracked a rich tapestry of shared lineage heritage, affinities, and values that have outperformed geographical peripheries (Abbas & Dana, 2024). These cultural similarities are deeply rooted in history, dating heretofore to the exchange of assertions, knowledge, and art along the ancient Silk Road. This research study investigated the cultural bonds between Pakistan and Iran, shedding light on the commonalities in literature, language, art, and cuisine that serve as binding elements. The present research study unveiled the complex web of connections that exists at the grassroots level through an examination of cultural affinity. It delves into how people-to-people exchanges, cultural festivals, and exchanges contribute to the promotion of reciprocal wisdom and benevolence between these two countries (Akbarzadeh, Ahmed, & Ibrahimi, 2021).

4.1.1. Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy collects the ties of the country's concentrated tool in shaping modern international relations. This study loomed the role of the aspect in Muslim region concerns especially Pakistan and Iran relations, emphasizing the intentional actions made by both countries to make use of cultural acquisitions for diplomatic purposes (Anwar, Mustafa, & Taimoor, 2025). It explores ambitions such as art exhibitions, cultural festivals, academic exchanges, and cultural means that serve as lines for fostering collaboration and mutual understanding of the dilemma and diplomacy. Yet, the research focuses on the significance of cultural diplomacy (Rasool et al., 2024), the interplay dilemma in bridging building people-to-people contacts, and the political divides of the Muslim region (Arain, Khaskheli, & Rasool, 2025). Likewise, It also reckons the cultural diplomacy developed to reshape global perceptions of Pakistan and Iran, potentially enhancing the soft power on the international dais, which mainly unites the originality of the regional order. In conclusion, the influences of cultural dilemma and interplay in the concern within Iran and Pakistan proves a captivating journey into the religious nuanced, common heritage, mutual understanding, and cultural diplomacy of the relations. It probes the wider influence of religious bonds and cultural relativity on the connections, while also mapping and underpinning the strategic role of diplomacy in enhancing the diplomatic objectives within the region. At the end, the comprehensive analysis and research showed the exclusive interplay of cultural dilemma in the South Asian region and the Middle Eastern question of international relations world which is based on the Muslim region unity and sacrifice.

4.1.2. Cultural Diplomacy as A Bridge

Cultural Diplomacy is a sign of interactions, amalgamation and enriching the system of global interactions. The pivot circumstance examined is the role of cultural diplomacy as a bridge between Pakistan and Iran which unities and matched the similar roots (Rasool, Syed, & Ahmed, 2023). Besides, it found similar symbols as an example of cultural exchanges, art exhibitions, mutual understanding, dressing and academic coalition (Rasool et al., 2024). The two countries Pakistan and Iran sought to foster strengthened relations and mutual understanding from the beginning at the grassroots level in the region (Basit, 2018). Overall, it is always seen as the consequence within people-to-people interconnection which surpasses political divides and enriches goodwill through these initiatives and resembles the intricate solving the diplomatic resolutions in the ties (Shah, 2023).

4.1.3. Cultural Diplomacy in Regional Forums

The proposed research examined the examples, intercourses where cultural diplomacy systematically operates in the regional forums between the countries. For instance, South Asian and Central Asian region joints cultural endeavors in organizations like the (Economic Cooperation Organization ECO) through the border and culture in the regional forum contributed to enhancing Pakistan and Iran and make use of the exchanges in the region. In conclusion, consequences are an expressive soft power continuing and a deep strengthened existence in regional processes, diplomatically unite the cultural understandings and its main theme (Khatti, Soomro, & Shah, 2022).

4.2. Religious Links

Religious relations include a cornerstone of Pakistan-Iran ties, given the significant existence of Shia Muslims in both countries (Rasool et al., 2024). This research found the religious dimensions of the connection, highlighting the role of spiritual leadership, theological exchanges, and pilgrimages. It investigates how shared religious trusts and techniques soft-soap their interactions, contributing to intent of solidarity and a shared spiritual heritage (Anwar, Mustafa, & Taimoor, 2025). Moreover, this proposed understudy examined the intricate within the religious activities, comprises of theological divergent disagreement and convergence. Thus, it cognate the influence of religious aspects on foreign policy, diplomacy considerations, transcultural and political will and decision-making in the Pakistan and Iran in Muslim region.

4.2.1. Religious Links and Regional Alliances

Pakistan is a Sunni state, but Iran is based on Shia ideology of Islam. Likewise, the proposed analysis surrounded the religious interlinks, particularly within the context of Sunni-Shia sectarian context. However, it enriched regional collaborations and cooperation and interplay discourses between regions. Henceforth, it paves the significance and implications of shared religious, mutual trusts and the solidarity, paving new roots fosters among Shia neighborhoods of Sunni brotherhood in nearby countries (Raza, 2020), within the Muslim region

which goes around the way. The outcomes enrich overseas and cross-border consent and develop regional contradiction and political alignments which distract the main body of state narrative. In consequences, the "Interplay and Implications" of the research exploration nourishes a highlighted research questions of outcomes and events related to the interplay between politico-cultural dimensions in the relations within Muslim region (Ahmed & Rasool, 2023). Thus, it improves the dawn on particular cases where the dimensions of the proposed research questions influenced impacting regional and international dynamics (Ranjan & Baba, 2023b), unraveling a nuisances sense of the various outcomes reshaping the bilateral ties and the impact on the wider region of South Asia and the Middle East within Muslim world.

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