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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Pakistan's Emergence as a Regional Mediator: An Analysis of Its Role in US-Iran Diplomatic Engagements (2025–2026)

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Abstract: This study explores how Pakistan's strategic location, historical relations with Iran, close ties with the United States, and growing engagement with Gulf states have created opportunities for Islamabad to play a constructive diplomatic role. The study particularly focuses on Pakistan's mediation efforts, diplomatic initiatives, and their implications for regional stability, Pakistan's foreign policy, and its international standing. Using a qualitative research approach based on diplomatic statements, official documents, policy reports, and secondary literature, the research evaluates whether Pakistan's engagement represents a sustainable shift toward middle-power diplomacy or a temporary response to regional tensions. The study argues that Pakistan's balancing position between competing regional and global powers provided it with a unique diplomatic space, while also presenting significant challenges.

Keywords: US, Iran, Pakistan, Strait of Hormoz, Peacemaker

Introduction

Since September 11, 2001, the strategic conflict between Iran and the United States has been a key characteristic of global politics, which has also implicated regional and world politics at large. Numerous sanctions, nuclear talks, and armed conflicts between them have produced a precarious geopolitical situation. In this situation, intermediary diplomacy became increasingly important to prevent further escalation and maintain the lowest possible level of communication between the two sides. In complex geopolitical games between Washington and Tehran, Pakistan's efforts and evolving role as a regional stabilizer demonstrated its newfound resolve as a mediator in promoting communication and confidence-building (Mohsin et al., 2026). Pakistan's diplomatic engagement with Tehran and its longstanding security ties with Washington served as the foundation for its mediation between Tehran and Washington. Pakistan adopted a cautious diplomatic approach in response to the escalating tensions in the Gulf region, and instead of taking direct involvement in the negotiations, it played a crucial role as a mediator (Naeem et al., 2026). The importance of governments with overlapping strategic links as indirect mediators in circumstances where direct communication is politically restricted has been emphasized in the academic literature on middle power diplomacy (Robertson, 2017). Third-party facilitation was frequently made possible in past between the US and Iran over nuclear negotiations, sanctions, and maritime security despite tensions. This time, indirect communication channels were made possible by Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, where misconceptions were lessened during times of crisis. Constructivist approaches in international politics contend that a mediator's

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abilities depend on their legitimacy, trust, and their ability to maintain objectivity under crisis (Maoz & Terris, 2006).

The recent changes in the geopolitical environment of the region brought about by the changing dynamics of the Gulf countries' alliances and global oil security concerns further emphasized the importance of mediation techniques. Pakistan's participation in pressuring the US and Iran to engage in dialog within the framework of a truce coincided with the rise of multi-actor diplomacy. However, it was unclear if such mediation would continue successfully because of power disparities and the lack of trust between Iran and the US.

Literature Review

The existing work on global mediation points out the increasing significance of the mediator role in resolving conflicts between hostile regimes. Sim & Fulton (2023) claim that régimes are capable of linking geopolitical boundaries and helping the negotiation to take place are certain capabilities of states. Such capabilities support international peace and harmony. In the context of US-Iran conflict mediation, the role of Pakistan has been of great importance and significance to end a worldwide implicated war and conflict. Shah et al. (2026) argue that it ought to be noted that the conflict between the US and Iran has brought political instability, accelerated geopolitical tension, disturbed regional energy flow and helped the growth of regional non-state actors. Therefore, the diplomatic role of Pakistan got global attention and praise. Most importantly, Pakistan's balanced ties and neutrality between the US and Iran helped Pakistan remain a credible, reliable and neutral mediator between them. Ijaz & Irshad (2026) investigated that Pakistan's balanced ties with the US and Iran helped Pakistan bridge the US-Iran gulf, play a backdoor diplomatic role and build confidence-building measures. In a similar vein, Khalid et al. (2026) emphasized that Pakistan's capability to carry on negotiations in resolving the conflict between the US and Iran has been fortified by the diplomatic means and geopolitical location between both states.

Furthermore, Kainaat (2026) investigated that despite many regional challenges, Pakistan was successful in maintaining diplomacy in the Middle East between Iran and the US. Similarly, Mohsin et al. (2026) argued that the efforts of Pakistan proved to be constructive in resolving a hot conflict between two big rivals, creating the lines of communication and discussion. The participation of Pakistan in bringing the US and Iran on one page in a worldwide-implicated conflict improved Pakistan's image at the international level. Studies of history suggest that such conflicts might start due to long-standing differences on both sides, but the efforts of Pakistan would always be written in praiseworthy words.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study highlight the positive diplomatic role of Pakistan, which took place in the conflict between the US and Iran. Pakistan focused on bringing both conflict nations to the negotiating table to ease the tension between them. Importantly, the key point in this finding is that Pakistan chose to be a facilitator between the two conflicting nations to get them to sit at the negotiating table. Pakistan created a trustworthy environment in Islamabad to initiate a dialogue process. The Foreign Office of Pakistan emphasized that, in order to achieve long-term peace, persistent political engagement, diplomatic channels and timely communication are the need of the hour between Iran and the US. Due to the geostrategic location and geopolitical environment of Pakistan, and long-term economic ties with both nations, Pakistan had a diplomatic advantage to play its part. During the US and Iran conflict, Pakistan was in a unique position to bring both nations closer and set them at the negotiating table. Existing literature has investigated that the USA and Iran did not have any direct negotiations after the Islamic Revolution since no state had tried to facilitate their negotiation, as their conflict did not affect regional and international politics. However, the recent conflict between the US and Iran was so sudden and complicated regional politics, disturbed the energy flow and created reasons for the closure of the Strait of Hormoz; therefore, it had regional and international implications (Bibi & Shah, 2026). So, Pakistan played a unique role in easing the tension

between them. It was not only to bring them to the negotiating table, but Pakistan also convinced both sides to resume talks and negotiations during the peak of tensions. Initially, Pakistan convinced both sides to have a temporary ceasefire, then convert it into a permanent truce of peace. Such efforts boosted the reputation and image of Pakistan at the international level. Pakistan was repeatedly in international media for its positive role and its capability to convince a superpower to settle its differences with Iran via table talks (Kousar et al., 2026). Actually, Pakistan served as a bridge between Iran and the USA to ease the tension and lessen the implications on regional energy security.

Discussion

The Diplomacy of Pakistan in the US-Iran conflict, which eased regional tension between them, had larger impacts. No doubt, Pakistan did not have an influential role in world politics as greater countries have, but the role played by Pakistan, even greater countries failed to perform. The role of Pakistan in converting the situation into a dialogue-based one is an immense contribution. It is important to note that due to mutual distrust, situations where parties remain unable to talk openly, the role of third parties' mediation becomes so crucial. Pakistan's readiness to interact with both sides illustrated how Pakistan's diplomacy could ease the tension between Iran and the USA. The neutrality of Pakistan in its foreign policy was a crucial part of its diplomacy. Pakistan was so cautious in its foreign policy that it remained neutral in the US-Iran conflict despite the fact that the Indian factor left no stone unturned to politicize the diplomatic role of Pakistan. Even on July 16, 2026, Pakistan repeatedly said that the Iran-US conflict would serve no nation's interest in the region (Ullah & Ullah, 2026). Pakistan also said that the ultimate resolution of the conflict is through table negotiation and mediation. The geographical factor, common issues and economic ties with Iran supported Pakistan in staying in contact with Iran, and meanwhile Pakistan had strong and historical ties with the US since 1947; therefore, bringing both nations to the table was relatively easier for Pakistan.

Pakistan as a Bridge between USA and Iran

The role of Pakistan in bridging the US-Iran gulf is an important development in world politics, as the conflict was so quickly spreading its regional and international implications on politics, economics, and security. The trust of Pakistan from both nations made the negotiation possible. Creating a negotiation environment between Iran and the US was a diplomatic victory since space for negotiation between them was so limited. Despite the presence of regional powers, Indian involvement and a confused political environment, Pakistan succeeded in offering space to both conflicting nations in Islamabad.

Thus, Pakistan provided space in Islamabad that could bridge US-Iran differences and allow both parties to sit at negotiating tables. This was a positive role that Pakistan played, which ultimately eased tension between Iran and the US, whose positive impacts were felt on regional and international politics and economics. Actually, the role of Pakistan in bridging US and Iran differences was the desire of both conflicting states, the complexity of regional fluctuations in the economy and strategic calculations (Alkhafaji, 2026). In this scenario, focusing on unilateral conflict resolution, Pakistan's position was better viewed as facilitation and mediation.

Positive Impact on Pakistan's International Image

While easing the tension between Iran and the US, bringing them under negotiating table, Pakistan's image improved significantly since the conflict had impacted the international economy. The role of Pakistan as a mediator signified a change in perception from one that was primarily focused on security to one that was linked to peace diplomacy. Pakistan was termed among the peacemakers at the global level (Ashfaq, 2026). Thus, the image of Pakistan rose significantly and considerably. Trust of both sides in Pakistan, especially the trust of the USA in Pakistan, created a positive impact on regional and international policies of Pakistan. Pakistan's mediation role, according to international research, has elevated the nation from a regional actor to a more important diplomatic stakeholder (Islam & Shah, 2026). Such a reputation for Pakistan has

developed its soft power, and its role has opened new connections and chapters for Pakistan to be the mediator and peacemaker in other regional and international conflicts in future. Thus, after developing its trust, the international community might expect Pakistan to play its positive role in Gulf, Afghanistan and South Asian security issues.

Contribution to Regional Peace and Stability

There is no doubt that the diplomatic strategy and contribution of Pakistan paved the way for regional peace and stability. Possibilities suggested that the conflict between the US and Iran would destabilize regional peace, which could involve regional non-state actors. However, Pakistan emerged as a regional mediator with positive intentions to direct the US-Iran pathway for regional peace and mediation. The conflict between Iran and the US impacted regional peace, oil prices and energy security; however, Pakistan's positive role directly eased the tension and brought regional peace and stability. As a result, Pakistan's peace diplomacy should be seen as more than just an effort to enhance its image abroad; it was a purely humanistic act and supported the peace-building process in the region.

Diplomatic Balancing Strategy Between the US and Iran

The most important point was the balancing act of Pakistan throughout the conflict between the US and Iran. Otherwise, siding with one party could affect the negotiation process. Backing the USA in the process would make the negotiation doubtful, while supporting Iran could weaken the diplomatic role of Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan maintained a balanced relationship throughout the process. Actually, Pakistan gave priority to regional peace and harmony; therefore, it avoided siding with any party and kept a neutral stance between the two conflict states.

For a nation like Pakistan, which works in a complicated geopolitical environment encompassing China, the US, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan, and India, where Indo-Afghan ties are meant to destabilize Pakistan, despite the fact that Pakistan took the right decision and maintained peace and harmony throughout the process (Jahanzaib, 2026).

Limits and Challenges of Pakistan's Positive Role

Since Pakistan did not have an influential political and economic role in world politics, its diplomatic role was not influential enough to direct and compel both parties to negotiate by any means. Throughout the process, Pakistan played the role of facilitator in good faith. It was not merely a one-time negotiating process, but rather it was a series of negotiations in which Pakistan appealed to both sides to ensure peace and harmony. Despite the fact that the negotiations faced deadlock many times due to violations of the terms and conditions of negotiation from the US side, Iran always maintained that, because of Pakistan being a guarantor, Iran would still entrust the negotiation process (Azam, 2026). Pakistan, despite facing economic challenges, successfully held the negotiation process between Iran and the US. After the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, Pakistan faced the oil crisis challenges the most among the neighboring countries.

Overall, Pakistan has shown that it can promote caution, improve communication, create diplomatic space, and support global peace initiatives at any stage.

Impacts of Pakistan's Diplomatic Role on Regional Peace and Economy

Positive Impact on Pakistan's International Image

The image of Pakistan was greatly improved at the global level. The role of Pakistan was appreciated via international media. In order to implement the Islamabad MoU, a meeting was held at Bürgenstock, Switzerland, on 21 June 2026. Even the Chief of Armed Forces of Pakistan, along with the Prime Minister, were invited (Ullah & Ullah, 2026). The role of Pakistan as a facilitator to ensure global peace was the need of the time, where Pakistan was the most favored state to convince both the US and Iran to be on one negotiating table. The role of Pakistan was further appreciated as it preferred regional and international

peace rather than side with any party. Bahgat (2023) says that bringing the US and Iran to one negotiating table has always been a tough ask; however, Pakistan succeeded in bridging their negotiating path. Pakistan facilitated direct, in-person talks between the US and Iran, underscoring the nation's unexpected role due to direct conflict between the US and Iran, but Pakistan played a significant role as a mediator. Pakistan showed its potential as a nation capable of fostering communication between rival world powers.

Impact on Regional Peace and Stability

The diplomatic role of Pakistan not only ensured regional peace, but it also ended a worldwide-impacted conflict in a very short period of time. It was expected that the US-Iran conflict would endanger regional peace in South Asia, the Middle East, the Gulf and other surrounding areas; however, Pakistan emerged as a responsible state to speed up its efforts for the sake of regional peace and harmony. The conflict between US and Iran in 2026 disturbed energy flow, regional and international trade and regional development; however, Pakistan jumped into the mediation process and mediated between US and Iran in no time (Bukhari, 2026). Pakistan has always placed a strong emphasis on moderation, communication, and diplomacy. In the end, disagreements must be settled through dialogue, according to the Foreign Ministry, which has declared that resuming hostilities serves no one's interests. In an effort to promote de-escalation, Pakistan has continued to interact with significant regional players (Ullah & Ullah, 2026). Therefore, even though Pakistan cannot independently decide the outcome of negotiations, its diplomatic engagement can be seen as a contribution to regional conflict management.

Impact on Energy Security and Economic Interests

The Role of Pakistan was significant as a mediator between the US and Iran, as the diplomatic role of Pakistan not only de-escalated an international conflict but also rescued collapsed economic indicators in the Middle East which arose after the US-Iran War. Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormoz stopped food and energy security, skyrocketed oil prices, and stopped regional trade, since the Strait of Hormoz has been a vital trade route for world energy supplies and trade engagement. The Foreign Office of Pakistan repeatedly expressed concerns over the decline of the world economy if the war continues. Therefore, it would not be wrong to conclude that Pakistan emerged as a rescuer and responsible state to rescue the regional economy. Therefore, the diplomatic role of Pakistan has to be termed more than just a question of prestige but rather a responsible state that prefers peace and harmony in the true sense. There is no doubt that a safe and more stable environment for international trade, business activities, investment, and regional economic engagement depended upon the diplomatic efforts of Pakistan during the US-Iran conflict (Ul Islam et al., 2026).

Impact on Pakistan's Role in International Politics

The war between the US and Iran impacted the global economy, created political division and blame-game politics; Pakistan emerged as a responsible state to ensure that the US-Iran conflict would no longer disturb world peace. Therefore, the diplomatic role of Pakistan was seen as a political triumph at the international level. Despite the lack of regional support, Pakistan also carried the role of mediation and brought both conflict states together for the sake of world peace. Such initiatives by Pakistan might open doors for Pakistan for future peace initiatives and dialogue. There is no doubt that Pakistan's rise to prominence as a peacemaker represents a major shift in its diplomatic standing abroad.

Critical Review

Overall, Pakistan played a significant and constructive diplomatic role in ending the US-Iran conflict. The primary doctrine of Pakistan's strategy was to ensure neutrality, provide communication space, facilitate mediation, and avoid direct involvement in the conflict. Basically, Pakistan's proximity to Iran, diplomatic connections with the US and association with Gulf countries allowed Pakistan to serve as a bridge. This entire process enhanced the political and diplomatic image of Pakistan at the global level (Khan et al., 2026). Actually, Pakistan proved that with positive intention, a regional power can be a source of mediation to

resolve a worldwide conflict whose impact was felt throughout the world. There is no doubt that the efforts of Pakistan have not ended the war in total, but rather Pakistan created hope for peace and regional security. Sustainable peace ultimately depends on the political resolve and strategic considerations of the major parties, as evidenced by the subsequent challenges surrounding the interim accord. Pakistan can help with the process, but it has no control over the outcome.

The study finds that Pakistan has played a positive role with positive intention, but now it depends upon the conflicting parties to end the war for a longer period.

Recommendations

Conversion of Ceasefire into Permanent Truce: The Diplomatic role of Pakistan has timely stopped the war; however, it needs further efforts to turn the ceasefire into a permanent peace treaty, which would guarantee peace and harmony in future.

Institutionalization of Pakistan's Mediation Role: The diplomatic efforts of Pakistan have no doubt brought timely peace, but such efforts and the dialogue process must be converted into a mechanism where peace lasts for a longer period of time. The entire mediation process may be institutionalized so that the chances of conflict decrease with the passage of time.

Strengthen Diplomatic Engagement with Iran: Pakistan and Iran should continue to communicate at a high level on a regular basis. Stable relations between Pakistan and Iran are crucial for Pakistan's national security because of their shared border and close regional ties.

Increased diplomatic interaction can also help avoid miscommunications and lessen the likelihood that border tensions will escalate into larger bilateral problems.

Maintain Constructive Relations with the United States: Pakistan should maintain its positive ties with the US at the same time. Islamabad should make it very evident that its interactions with Iran are meant to advance regional stability and peace so that the trust between Pakistan and the US may grow further.

Pakistan's diplomatic flexibility would be enhanced, and the possibility of miscommunication about its mediation efforts would be decreased with a balanced relationship with the US and Iran.

Promote Regional Diplomacy: Pakistan ought to increase its interaction with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Turkey, and other regional players engaged in attempts to resolve conflicts. The framework for mediation between Pakistan and Qatar shows how regional cooperation can open up new diplomatic avenues. The Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding and the Pakistan-Qatar Joint Statement are frameworks for the peace process.

Protect Pakistan's Energy Security: By diversifying its energy sources, strengthening strategic reserves, encouraging renewable energy, and enhancing domestic energy production, Pakistan might lessen its dependency on external energy shocks. The US-Iran dispute has shown that Gulf instability may swiftly turn into a problem for nations far outside the immediate battle zone in terms of energy security and the economy.

Boost Trade and Economic Ties with Neighboring Nations: While maintaining relations with the international community, Pakistan should keep fostering lawful commercial and economic relations with Iran. Increased regional economic interdependence can boost stability and give Pakistan more diplomatic clout.

Create a Long-Term Plan for Regional Peace: Pakistan ought to develop a thorough, long-term plan for maintaining peace and security in the region. Diplomacy, economic cooperation, energy security, border management, and regional connectivity should all be incorporated into such a plan.

The goal should be to make Pakistan a reasonable contributor to peaceful dispute resolution and conflict prevention.

Conclusion

The study's conclusions show that Pakistan took a positive stance by placing a strong emphasis on communication, moderation, peaceful conflict resolution, and mediation. Instead of publicly supporting Washington or Tehran, Pakistan made an effort to stay in touch with all sides and offer a forum for talks. Pakistan's ability to foster direct contact between two extremely unfriendly powers was proved by holding US-Iran negotiations in Islamabad.

Pakistan's diplomatic strategy has also improved its standing abroad. Repositioning Pakistan as a responsible regional actor and a potential contributor to global peace has been made possible by its rise to prominence as a mediator. Pakistan has diplomatic advantages that can be put to good use because of its strategic location, ties to Iran, longtime relationship with the United States, and ties to Gulf nations.

Therefore, Pakistan's participation should be assessed based on its capacity to sustain communication, lower tensions, promote conversations, and offer prospects for peaceful settlement.

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