

Analyzing Geopolitical Relationship of Iran and Pakistan

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Abstract

Pak-Iran relations are of great importance for both states. There have been some stumbling blocks in bilateral relations: India-Iran ties, Sectarianism, Jundullah, and the Taliban are all factors that have harmed relations in the post-9/11 era. However, the changing regional dynamics provide for opportunities following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. This research looks into the factors that did not allow the relationship to grow altogether despite the existing potential in the post-9/11 period. The growing India-Iran ties, their North-South Transport Corridor, and the Indian plan to include Chabahar in it are causing concern in Islamabad. This mistrust needs to be bridged to augment cooperation. Moreover, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the China-Iran comprehensive cooperation agreement are good developments for both Pakistan and Iran to turn the relationship into a closer partnership. The changing dynamics in the region provide opportunities for both the states to adopt.

Keywords: Pak-Iran Relations, Taliban, Geopolitics.

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Significance of Research

1. The post-9/11 strategic environment of the region brought new opportunities and challenges for Iran and Pakistan, affecting their bilateral and multilateral relations. Pakistan and Iran's interests and concerns are interlinked in the new regional and global environment. For the last two decades, owing to some minor irritants, the two countries have been unable to take full advantage of available opportunities to bolster the Tehran-Islamabad relationship. Apart from the enormity of differences between two brotherly Muslim Countries, external powers and non-state actors have played a very significant role in undermining their ties. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these setbacks, there is a way forward to consolidate and revitalize their relations.

1. Research Methodology

2. This research paper relies mainly on the qualitative method of data analysis from the related literature review. The same method was also used in the data collection, where the descriptive method has been utilized. The qualitative method functions mainly as means of analyzing the different information that are represented in the literature review, while highlighting the researcher's personal opinion to the topic of interest.

2. Capacities, Challenges and Geopolitical Interests of Pakistan

2-1.Introduction N

1. Pakistan is located at a region which has great political, economic and strategic location. It has been hub of activities of great powers for last 20 years (Afnan,2014:187). It has witnessed intervention of three great powers i.e., Britain, USSR, and USA. Its significance was further enhanced during Cold War when it becomes ally of US policy of containment of USSR and now the post-cold war era has witnessed its significance particularly after the events of 9/11. Pakistan and Iran share the same religion, geographical connection, and cultural resemblance. Hence, despite some issues, the relations between the two brotherly states are smooth both at the governmental and public levels. Iran is important in Islamabad's foreign policy as the latter sees the former as a vital stakeholder for regional economic prosperity and security (Yousafzai,2023).

2-2.Overview of Pakistans Political Importance

2. US interests in the regions are to contain the Growing China, Iran, Afghanistan, and to benefit from the market of India. Security and business

are two main US interests in the region while Pakistan is playing a front-line role against terrorism. Today the political scenario of the region is tinged with pre-emption policy and US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran's nuclear program, India's geopolitical muscles (new strategic deal with US) to gain the hegemony and to counter the **"The Rise of China"** which has earned all the qualities to change unipolar world into Bipolar world. In all these issues, Pakistan is directly or indirectly involved. The American think tanks have repeatedly accepted that war against terror could never be won without the help of Pakistan.

2-3. Geostrategic Significance

3. When Pakistan emerged on the map of the world as a sovereign and independent state in August 1947, it had extremely vulnerable defense and fragile economy. However, despite numerous setbacks, crises and turmoil of gigantic magnitude, it has so far been able to survive and make progress due to several factors, perhaps the most important of which is its strategic geographical location and its particular ideology. Andrew Koryak views Pakistan as a **'zipper state'** that is;

"Uniquely poised to zip together a variety of economic blocs, taking advantage of both its convenient geography and China's grand investment vision to make it happen."

4. The geographic location of Pakistan makes it a junction of the three important parts of the world; South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia. Pakistan is thus located in one of the most sensitive regions of the world where global rivalries of great power, accentuated by local rivalries came into conflict with each other and serve to heighten Pakistan's security concerns. Safeguarding its security is, therefore, a principal aim of Pakistan's foreign policy even under normal circumstances. In today's troubled times, it has become foremost preoccupation.

2-4. Muslim Country with Nuclear Arsenal

5. Pakistan's strategic position in the world has been considerably increased ever since it has achieved nuclear capability, which has made it the only Muslim country armed with atomic weapons. Pakistan is confronting countless problems and facing grave energy shortages but even then, its nuclear power has significantly elevated its importance in the international community. In the region, Pakistan's nuclear capability has great influence on the political, socio-economic activities and the

maintenance of status quo. A historian has perhaps rightly said that: -
“In almost 80 years since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, if any work mentioning incident took place in the whole Muslim world, it was May 1998, when Pakistan carried out its nuclear explosions”.

2-5. Gateway to Central Asia (Oil and Energy Game)

6. Central Asia is the center stage of new Great games. Western quest for resources; oil and energy resources are in the Central Asia. After USSR decline, new quest started which is as manifested by politics of oil. Pakistan is located very close to the oil rich Middle Eastern countries. The belt started from Iran and extended to Saudi Arabia. In the energy scarce world, Pakistan is located in the hub of energy rich countries i.e., Iran and Afghanistan; both are energy abundant while India and China are lacking. China finds way to Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea through Karakoram highway. Moreover, Pakistan through Arabian Sea is linked with the Muslims Countries of Persian Gulf.

Figure (1): Map Central Asia



2-6. Political Instability and Military Interventions

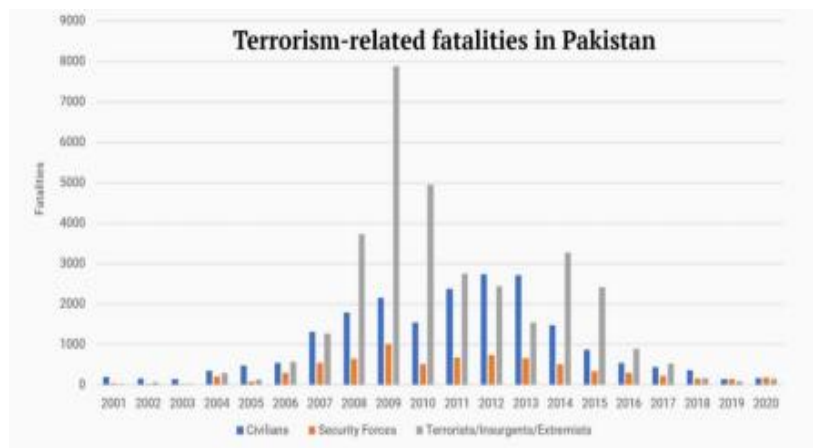
7. Unfortunately, since independence, Pakistan lacked political stability. There have been many military interventions. Civilian politics particularly

in the last few decades has been characterized by corruption, inefficiency and confrontations between various institutions. Alternating rule of civilian and military governments has not helped to establish political stability. In fact, Military interventions have been necessitated due to political turmoil.

2-7.Border Tension, Terrorism and Security Perspective

8. Pakistan's role on the world stage emerged after the 9/11 attacks on World Trade Centre in New York. US decided to attack Taliban ruled Afghanistan. Pakistan dropped support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and emerged as the front-line state in the fight against terrorism. She became a key ally of Washington in GWOT and was declared as US non-NATO Ally. Pakistan employed over 1,20,000 active soldiers to maintain control over the restive tribal regions along the Afghan border, where Taliban-linked militants became firmly entrenched. These terrorists / extremists have expanded attacks from their stronghold FATA in entire country. Since 2009, Pakistan Armed Forces have successfully flushed out Taliban from Swat and FATA especially from South Waziristan however, North Waziristan still remains violent and hostile.

Figure (2): Terrorism Related Fatalities in Pakistan from 2001 till 2020



2-8.Impact of Geopolitics on Pakistan-Central Asia Ties

9. Despite having had close religion and cultural bonds, Pakistan could not nurture deep political, economic and socio-cultural relations with Central Asian region owing to its Afghan foreign policy (Iqbal,1988). Today, Pakistan and Central Asian relations are not as warm, close and deep as

Pakistan desired once the Central Asian came into existence. An array of domestic and cross-frontier impediments inhibited the growth of close and deep relationships between Pakistan and Central Asian states. Domestically, Pakistan had been combating fragile economic and political issues which other powers had not to worry of (Farhat,2014); the US, Russia, China, India, Iran, Turkey had been stable and strong countries in the region. Instability and poor security situation in Afghanistan had, and it still has, a great role to play in the poor relationships with Central Asia. Pakistan's unstable and fragile law & order, and security situation in Baluchistan and erstwhile FATA (merged in KPK province) which particularly ran astride Afghanistan border remained key impediment to join hands with Central Asia in joint economic projects which Pakistan wanted to pursue - be it proposed pipelines for oil and gas, trade or political harmony. Contending strategic interests of several regional and world powers had also barred Pakistan to foster strategic and strong relations with Central Asia. It is prudent to view Pakistan-Central Asia Relations from the prism of these powers.

2-9.Russian Strategic Interests in Central Asia and Pakistan

10. Pakistan and Russia have not engaged in consistent, strong and close relations due Pakistan's presence in anti-Russian camp during the Cold War and support of Mujahedeen during Afghan War. However, post 9/11 relations between Russia and Pakistan warmed up and gradually Pakistan has come closer to Russia due to increasing gulf between US-Pakistan relations vis-à-vis Indo-US strategic alliance, Pakistan-Chinese strategic partnership vis-à-vis Russia-Chinese alliance, BRI offers further connectivity with Russia. For Russia, Central Asia provides it a strategic depth and leverage. Any geopolitical developments taking place in Central Asia, Russia views it critically as Central Asia is considered as Russian backyard. Thus, Pakistan needs to adopt a cautious approach and ought to be very watchful with respect to its policy in Central Asian states and Afghanistan. Russia has lot of residual socialist elite in Central Asia post-USSR disintegration, so Russia, in one or the other form tries to assert itself in all political and economic decision-making in the Central Asian region. Therefore, it is a rightful policy of Pakistan, though by default, to establish reliable and strong relations with Russia to ensure close and strategic ties with Central Asian states.

2-10. Chinese Strategic Interests in Central Asia and Pakistan

11. Given the strong, stable and strategic relations between Pakistan and China, in all spheres of life, both these states have shared interests in the region in general. They support and endorse each other. The interests converge especially in the trade and energy sectors. China's dream of connectivity and shared prosperity has influenced the world in general, and the Eurasian region, Asia and Africa in particular. BRI is a project of connecting world, and it has its branches passing through Central Asia to connect the East to the West.

Figure (3): The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI or B & R)



2-11. United States Geopolitics in Central Asia and Impact on Pakistan

12. Pakistan and the US relationship has been a roller coaster. Both the states have been strong partners in the interests of the US, but the relations were never trustworthy and stable. Pakistan was frontline ally in Afghan War and Pakistan has been one in Got. However, the US and Pakistan both are wary of each other. Pakistan could not harmonize and leverage itself being the major partner of the US. Given such spasmodic relationship, Pakistan does not see the US support in harboring Pakistan in Central Asia. Since the US has its strategic interests (Stephen, 2008) in the Central Asia in terms of containment of Russian resurgence and Chinese expansion, access to hydrocarbons, and war against terror, Pakistan and the US are misaligned in this region except for the agenda on the Got.

13. Pakistan being a “frontline non-NATO state” in Got, provided transit way for war supplies for Afghanistan. Central Asia also provided the US with the alternatives, thus skinning the Pakistan’s significance too. The US evacuation from Afghanistan post-US Taliban Peace Agreement, may allow the US to increase its focus on the Central Asia. Simultaneously, China Pakistan strategic relations, and growing Russia-Pakistan relations cause apprehensions in the US. On the other hand, China also views the US military existence in Central Asia as a threat and containment strategy. Thus, the US and Pakistan seem misaligned in Central Asia, and Pakistan needs to craft its foreign policy towards Central Asia and Afghanistan so as to establish close relations with the region mitigating fallouts of the US policy.

2-12.Divergence of Indian and Pakistans Interests in Central Asia

14. Pakistan-India animosity is a denominator of South Asian politics, and it casts its shadows in global relations. Both the countries strive for their increased diplomatic influence, economic cooperative agreements, security partnerships and strategic alliances to tilt geopolitical and strategic weight to one’s favor. Pakistan operates on a defensive foreign policy design in comparison to India. In Central Asia, Pakistan estimates that it is better placed to build stronger relations due to socio-cultural, religious, Pakistan-China affection vis-à-vis Indo-China rivalry, China-Central Asia proximity, and Pakistan’s own geographical proximity towards Central Asia. India is devoid of direct route to Central Asia; it is bound to access the region through Pakistan and then Afghanistan.

15. However, despite all these factors, India has been able to ingress, assert and establish itself with Central Asia firmly (Sharanya,2019). Exploiting vulnerability of Afghanistan in post-9/11 scenario, and luring Afghani leadership, India chalked its way in Afghanistan and onward to Central Asian region. Deep access in Afghan territory has put India in a strategic advantage in national security and political context, thinning the strategic depth Pakistan used to boast of.

2-13.Energy Projects and Geopolitics of Pakistan

16. In recent decades few energy projects in Pakistan’s neighborhood have been proposed as avenues of cooperation among regional states. Three projects are of particular note: -

- (a) Iran-Pakistan-India/Iran-Pakistan (IPI / IP) gas pipeline;
- (b) Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline

project; and (c) Central Asia-South Asia (CASA-1000) electricity transmission system.

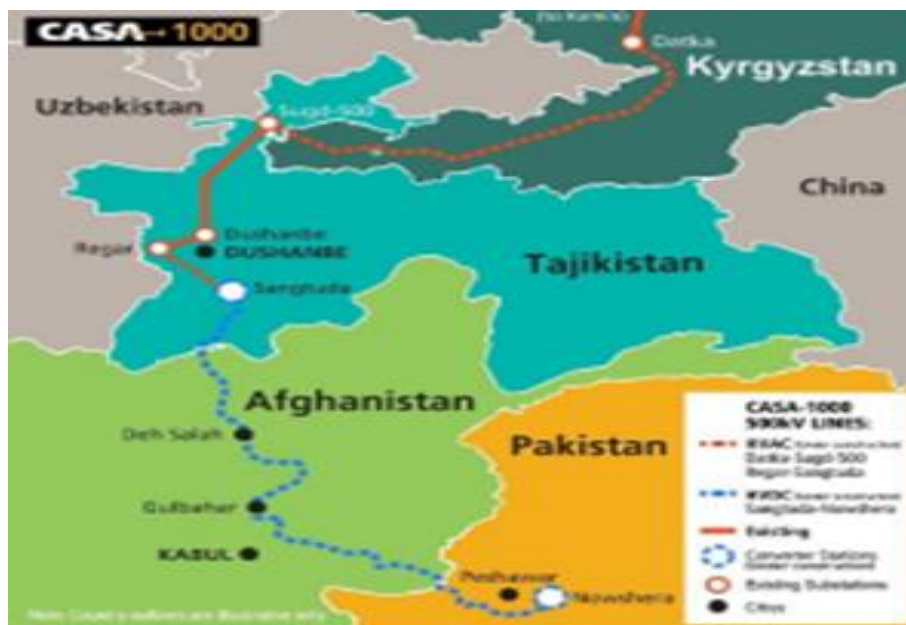
17. Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline. First proposed as IPI, later became to be called as IP. In 2009, a year after the operationalizing nuclear deal with Washington, New Delhi pulled out of the project citing price and security issues. Islamabad and Tehran continued to pursue it, while the United States opposed Pakistani's pursuit of the gas-pipeline project. Despite immense US pressure in 2013 the ground-breaking ceremony was held. However, construction within Pakistan has not yet commenced. Pakistan claims US sanctions on Iran prohibit it from procuring funds from international funding institutions for the construction of the pipeline.

18. TAPI Gas Pipeline Project. TAPI natural gas pipeline project is aimed at exporting 33-billion cubic meters of natural gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India through a 1600 km long pipeline. Few issues however are yet to be resolved before any meaningful progress could be made. First, continued conflict in Afghanistan means TAPI will be unable to get off the ground. Second, countries undertook prolonged negotiations to arrive at a pricing formula and yet a consensus agreement remains elusive. Third, arranged long-term financing mechanisms of up to US\$15 billion for the construction of the pipeline and allied infrastructure. Asian Development Bank has committed to finance the initial construction of the pipeline (Bhutta,2016), and now Saudi Arabia has also expressed an interest in investing in the project (Aliyeva,2021). Despite these issues, a ground-breaking ceremony was held in December 2015, but actual work has yet to commence in Pakistan (Bhutta,2018).

19. CASA-1000. Similarly, the CASA-1000 project has been marred by mistrust and conflict in the region. It was conceived as a 1270 km transmission line supplying 1300 MWs of electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. Pakistan will consume 1000 MWs and the remaining 300 MWs will be Afghanistan's share. The project is part of the CASA Regional Energy Market (CASAREM) (Nawaz,2016). International development banks, American and British international aid agencies are supporting the project. After years of delays and protracted talks, the project has entered the construction phase. Now the major challenge is ensuring the security of transmission lines in conflict-ridden Afghanistan. The successful construction and implementation of the project will positively influence relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It can

emerge as a model for regional cooperation amidst geopolitical mistrust between regional nations.

Figure (4): CASA-1000



3. Position of Iran in the Geopolitical View of Pakistan Iran-Heartland of Worlds Corridor

20. It has become a truism that Iran or ancient Persia has been considered as being located in one of the most geographically central areas of the world. Therefore, Iran has a special geopolitical role as continues to be nestled between two important waterways in the region: the Persian Gulf in the south and the Caspian Sea in the north, both of them have significant volumes of valuable hydrocarbon resources (Esfahani,2019). This Geoeconomic position of Iran, which is located between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, allows the continuation of energy pipelines from these areas to the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

Figure (5): Heartland Theory

21. In addition, in a world without sanctions, Iran continues to have the shortest, safest and most economical way to export oil and gas from these regions to the outside world. Hence, as a land bridge, Iran connects Central Asia / the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf sub-region on the one hand and the Mediterranean / East to South Asia on the other. With this geography, there comes interdependence as Iran is directly involved and influenced by the geopolitical developments of the four sub-regions of the Persian Gulf, "the Eastern Mediterranean, Central Asia / Caucasus and South Asia". All these capacities and capabilities have made it possible for Iran to play a major transit role as the energy transit hub of the region (South and Reshined,2011), even under US sanctions.

22. Furthermore, Iran is also a connecting axis in the South Asian corridor and will fully establish European rail links with the Indian subcontinent once the 235 km Zahedan-Kerman railway axis is completed. In addition, by joining the TRACECA Corridor, Iran has paved the way for the membership of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which wish to join the corridor, and has improved the southern route option for this corridor which is pivotal in order to transit goods from Europe to Central Asia and China (and in the reverse direction). Iran's accession to this corridor has increased regional convergence as well as the coordination of transit principles; in

fact, the presence of Iran, if it develops its domestic transport infrastructure, can be effective in strengthening the infrastructure of TRACECA, which is its most important challenge.

23. This geo-transit situation if placed as a geopolitical code on the agenda of Iran's foreign policy could turn this country, which has water and land neighbors with 15 countries, into a corridor heartland of the region and the world. Reducing the severe economic dependence on oil, improving the role of ports as the most important geo-economic assets of a coastal state, creating and developing railways and roads, will be the results of applying this strategic perspective. These factors could also shift the balance of power in the Shatter Belt of the Middle East in favor of Iran.

24. Iran has traditionally looked west toward Europe for picking up trade and investment partners. In the recent years, it has grown frustrated with European countries that have not opposed President Trump's policy of maximum pressure, implicitly abandoning the deals that the nuclear agreement once promised.

3-1.Iran and Chin Relations: A Game Changer for the Middle East

25. In 2018, when the Trump administration suddenly withdrew from the nuclear agreement and reimposed secondary sanctions on Iran, the interest returned to China (ECFR,2020). In the aera of maximum pressure resulting in a peak of sanctions regime, China allowed a potential safeguard for the Iranian economy and industry. Additionally, Iran is needing China as the main destination for its oil exports, and increasingly for economic, industrial, and diplomatic support. Thus, Iran remained in China's orbit, as China was a promoter of Joao and made lobby to preserve the nuclear deal, providing crucial support.

26. **China Pursuing Irans Loyalty.** On the other hand, Iran fully understands the implications of China's swift rise as a global power. China, meanwhile, understands that Iran is a major regional power located at the crossroads of the Middle East and Central Asia, an area deemed paramount for the Belt and Road Initiative. Iran and China have quietly crafted their way into an agreement worth millions of dollars, translated into a Chinese important presence in banking, in many infrastructure projects that help Iran get outside the isolation produced by the duress of sanctions blocking the Iranian government. China is pursuing Iran's loyalty to raise its influence in the Middle East, through the agreement, while helping the Iranian economy to thrive.

27. Shift in Worlds Economic Centre of Gravity. The Iranian movements are not detached from global tendencies. For instance, the Alienization happened in a global context, where the center of the world economy gravitates toward Asia.

“In 2008 the world’s economic center of gravity had moved close to Izmir, thus having been pulled 4,800 km (75 percent of the Earth’s radius) eastward across the surface of the planet.”

Figure (6): Map Depicting Shift in World’s Economic Center of Gravity



28. The calculation takes into account all the gross domestic products generated globally. Thus, an estimated calculus for **2050** indicates that the center moves further East, somewhere between India and China. This is how a mutual benefit relationship started between the Middle East and China (as between supplier and distributor), along the lines of energy and economics.

3-2.Iran’s Challenging Environment under Sanctions

29. However, the greatest geopolitical challenge to Iran’s position as the heartland of corridors are the policies of The United States as the Brain land against this state on a global scale. The United States, as the Brain land does not want Iran, which was introduced by Jeffrey Kemp as the center of the two poles of energy, to become the corridor heartland of the world. One of the most important actions of the United States and its strategic allies is the

geopolitics of everything without Iran, which seeks to divert the passage of international corridors to the rival corridors of this country. The landlocked states to reach the ocean waters, as reflected in the Ashgabat agreement. This geo-transit position of Iran in the twenty-first century's global Geo-Polynomial system, which relies on the geographical-political-economic resources centered on ports and corridors, can provide this country with many playing cards in regional and global power games.

4. Geopolitical Capacities of Iran and Pakistan

30. Security is seen as the ability to secure State survivability and territorial integrity and ensuring political autonomy (Buzan, 1995:188). The interplay of geography and politics has an all-pervasive and deep impact on both Iran's and Pakistan's security perceptions and shape their security strategies. Both Iran and Pakistan define their security in terms of overcoming their social, politico-military and territorial vulnerabilities. Moreover, Iran's concept of security includes preserving its ideology and faith upon which the system as a whole is based.

4-1. Security Perceptions

31. Iran's main security interests lie in West Asia, especially in the Persian Gulf region and secondarily on its northern and eastern sides, whereas Pakistan's principal security concerns revolve around India and secondarily Afghanistan. Any development either in the Persian Gulf or South Asia will affect both countries due to regional contiguity. Security complexes play an important role in regional formations and alliances but they are not everlasting and free from deformation (Buzan, 1991:193-200). Iran's friendly or unfriendly attitude towards the Persian Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia, would have a direct impact on Iran-Pakistan relations. Likewise, Iran's relations with India will not go unnoticed by Pakistan. Iran-Pakistan relation will be also constantly influenced by the US and its involvement in Pakistan. Pakistan is a friend and ally of the US whereas Iran is its adversary.

4-2. Strategic Compulsion and Interest Accommodation

32. Two major developments – the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan - completely changed the geopolitics and a new game started in the region where the US lost Iran and the Soviet Union gained Afghanistan. These two developments brought substantial changes in Iran-Pakistan relations. Iran, a revolutionary State, emerged as a

cardinal challenger to the status quo in the Persian Gulf whereas Pakistan with the US help emerged as the frontline State in the American-led coalition against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

4-3. Conflict and Cooperation in Afghanistan

33. With the establishment of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, Iran-Pakistan relations began to deteriorate and a climate of mistrust emerged. Pakistan's long desired goal of gaining 'strategic depth' was sought to be attained through a favorable Taliban government in Afghanistan. Also, Pakistan's influence in Central Asia through Afghanistan was bound to increase. At the same time, Iran was competing to increase its influence in Central Asia. Both countries had been struggling to increase their influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

4-4. Nuclear Arsenal Race in the Region

34. Iran understood that India's nuclear tests in May 1998 had changed the 'geostrategic situation' and the power balance. Despite divergence of their views on many issues, Iran hailed Pakistan's nuclear tests of May 28-30, 1998. Iran's Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi was the first foreign dignitary to visit Islamabad on June 1, 1998, and congratulated Pakistan for its nuclear achievement by saying,

"Now, they (Muslims) feel confident, because a fellow Islamic nation possesses the knowhow to build nuclear weapons."

35. Iran's UN Envoy in Geneva, Ali Khorram said, "India's blasts disrupted the strategic balance in the subcontinent...as a result of Pakistan following suite." Iran supported Pakistan's nuclear tests while India's May 11-13, 1998 nuclear tests became source of concern for Iran and most West Asian countries and other regional states.

4-5. Changing Regional Realities

36. The growing India-Iran relationship in recent years clearly marks a shift in Iran's policies toward India. Both countries have shown interests for close cooperation in the fields of economy and defense. India's cooperation with Iran on the Afghanistan issue has generated anxieties among Pakistani policy-makers. India's increasing involvement in Afghanistan and its close relation with the Afghan government is perceived by Pakistan as detrimental to its interests. India's presence in Afghanistan creates uneasiness among the Pakistani elites that had come to see Afghanistan as an 'exclusive area of its influence'.

4-6. Defence Cooperation

37. Defense cooperation is one of the most important ingredients in Iran-Pakistan relations. It reflects shared perceptions in the security arena. The depth and significance of these ties are reflected in the Pakistan-Iran Defense Agreement of July 1989. Iran is involved with Pakistan in the joint production of the Pakistan supplied Al-Khalid tanks. Other areas for joint defense cooperation is under considerations such as helicopters, commercial vehicles, and APCs. Recently, various diplomatic mission is being scheduled between Iran-Pakistan with emphasis on strengthening ties between the two countries, with a particular focus on security and defense cooperation. These visits can be seen as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral relations and underscores the importance Pakistan places on its connections with Iran. Moreover, China, Pakistan and Iran also held their first counter-terrorism dialogue in Beijing, signaling the emergence of new alignments in the region. The dialogue was seen as a key indicator of new alliances with China in the lead role after Beijing brokered a landmark deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran, leading to the restoration of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

5. Identification and Analysis of Regional Divergence Factors Divergence/Challenges Sunni Insurgents: A Big Bottleneck in Improving Pak-Iran Relations

38. Sunni insurgents who operate in Iran's Arabia and province are a severe concern for Tehran. Iran blames Pakistan for extending support to these organizations or at least providing them with a haven in Baluchistan. However, Pakistan has denied sheltering militants on its soil or turning a blind eye to them.

39. **Genesis of Jundullah and ITS Implications.** Both Iran and Pakistan view Jundullah as a terrorist organization. This outfit is officially banned in Pakistan. It originated in Sistani-o-Baluchistan but later stretched its network to the borders of Pakistani Baluchistan and other cities (Zahra, 2009). Iran strongly feels that the militant outfit was raised and is being funded by United States and Britain with the mandate to create internal split in Iran. Jundullah is a violent movement against Iran, and many people blame it for terrorist attacks that happened inside Iran. In these attacks, Iranian citizens, government personnel, and security forces, mainly the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, were targeted. Iran claims that Jundullah is a rebel group aiming to separate the Sunni-dominated area

from Iran. Official sources in Baluchistan have firmly rejected it and maintained that Pakistan had not allowed its territory to be used for anti-Iran activity. Time and again, from Pakistan, Iran has been demanding concrete steps to contain Jundullah's activities. Pakistan has made sincere efforts in this regard.

5-1.Obstinate Roles of Extra Regional Forces

40. Apart from the aforementioned security scenario, there is yet another dimension of the relationship of the Southwest Asian countries, seriously impeding their bilateral relations. This particular aspect deals with their relationships with extra regional countries, who indeed 'are not friends of friends,' thus do not enjoy similar relations with all other countries of the region. These alliances indeed have been the main sources of deformation in the bi-lateral relationship of Southwest Asian countries.

5-2.Pakistan-Saudi Relations as a Factor

41. Iran's close relations with India concern Islamabad, like Saudi-Pakistan cooperation, and this closeness is a bother for Tehran. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been rivals for a long time. Whenever there is closeness between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, we see a bonhomie between New Delhi and Tehran. The Arab Spring for more than a decade has further broadened the gap between Riyadh and Tehran, which has led to proxy wars in the Persian Gulf. Iran has been supporting the Houthi in Yemen, damaging Saudi-Iran relations considerably. However, Pakistan must maintain balance in its relations with both Riyadh and Tehran (Vatanka,2016). Pakistan does not want to antagonize its relations with either state because of its weak economic situation, fraught relations with India, and its connectivity in the region that will boost its economic condition.

5-3.Shia-Sunni Factor

42. Among other irritants in Pak-Iran relations, the Sunni-Shia rift is also a cause of divergence between the two states. Iran, a country with a Shia majority, believed in supporting Shias in Pakistan and employing them in conflict zones to serve its interests. Iran believes the Shia community is under repression in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and they shall be helped. Hence, the Shia factor profoundly impacts relations between both states.

5-4.Afghanistan and India

43. Pakistan and Iran have vital stakes in peace and stability in Afghanistan.

An insecure and unstable Afghanistan after the drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force could have serious implications for the internal security of the countries in the region – mainly Pakistan, India and Iran, which have been competing in Afghanistan in terms of geopolitical, economic and national security interests since the Soviet-Afghan war. However, what might disturb Pakistan is Iran's partnership with India in many strategically significant construction projects in Afghanistan (Sial,2015). Because Pakistan thinks that India is using Afghan soil to support the Baluch nationalist insurgency in Pakistan's Baluchistan province and anti-Pakistan Taliban militants in Pakistan's tribal areas, Iranian cooperation with India in Afghanistan could serve as a major irritant in Pakistani-Iranian ties.

5-5.The Gulf between People and Governments

44. For an astute dealing with the issues like Jundullah attacks in Iranian territory, or the anti-state activities of sub-nationalists in Pakistan, authorities of both countries must realize that, **“If the Baloch's were taken on board in the first place, possibility of infiltrating the harsh terrain of Baluchistan by foreign actors would have been a much difficult, if not impossible, a task.”**(Eshima,2009) Hence, accommodation of all political, ethnic, and religious forces active in the politics of Baluchistan is mandatory to ensure stability in the region. This would, inevitably, stabilize affected areas of both Baluchistan's. Like Iranian Baluchistan, over past few years, there has been a widening of the gulf between the successive Federal Governments and the people of Baluchistan in Pakistan. Adequate preference has not been provided to social development, political participations, and poverty alleviation of the people of Baluchistan.

5-6.Exploitation of Masses

45. This poverty ridden people over the years felt deprived and became an easy target available to be exploited, either by the foreign powers through their intelligence apparatus, or by some of the local Sardars, who otherwise had historical connections with outside powers since the colonial rule in the region. Quite a few of those Sardars were even enjoying the status of the heads of autonomous princely states, therefore had the anguish of losing the power to a central authority. There have been similar problems in the Arabia and of Iran. Being outlying and tribal society by nature, Iranian Government like Pakistan could not pay worthwhile attention for the

improvement of the living standard of the people of Arabia and. Hence, both provinces; Pakistani and Iranian Baluchistan's are sparsely populated with poor infrastructure and vast inhospitable areas, difficult to be maintained without keen interest by the local representatives (The Frontier Post,2009).

5-7.Isolation and Alienation in Nobody's Interest

46. The question arises that for how long non-state actors and extra-regional powers, particularly those who have been friends to none but portraying as such, would drive Pak-Iran relations. It is pertinent to mention, that at the level of the people, there have been no differences at all. Rather, the less-warmth in their bilateral relationship at the level of governments, have been taken unenthusiastically by the masses on both sides, who because of religious and cultural affinities desire an easy access to either country.

6. Recommended Future Course

47. Following steps can help revive Pakistan-Iran relations in the right direction that would benefit both the countries politically, economically and strategically.

(a) **Restoration of Trust.** The most critical phase in the Pak-Iran relations is the restoration of trust, which for one reason or another has been a missing link since late 1980s. Restoration of trust is of paramount importance because the level of trust determines the perception of the two capitals about each other, and that perception works as a guideline during policy formulation stage. And for the restoration of the trust, it is a prerequisite to respect each other's sovereignty in true sense. To avoid the chances of illegal trade and smuggling by criminal gangs, there is a need to enhance the legal and formal trade between both countries. The enhanced volume of trade would increase the stakes and bring interdependency between both states. In this regard, perking-up the 1949, 'Treaty of Friendship to Initiate Trade Relations' (Ali, 2001:145), between both countries will be a step in the right direction.

(b) **Promotionn of CBMS.** In spite of differing point of views of the two counties on some issues, there have been innumerable confidence-building measures (CBMs), both at the level of states and the masses. Indeed, these measures did not let the derailment of the Pak-Iran relationship. Strategists in both countries acknowledge that, owing to factors like religious affinity,

cultural linkages, and economic compulsions, both nations cannot afford detachment from each other. In the changed strategic environment emerging from the concentration of global players in the region, Pakistan and Iran must come closer to each other for taking a common stance on issues of strategic significance, like security that impinge both with different faces. There is a requirement that both countries should undertake steps for deeper cooperation in the field of economy and security.

(c) **Cooperation in Defence Production.** Cooperation in the field of defense production is yet another area that can be jointly undertaken by both countries and would address the security concerns of each. This cooperation can be extended to the Persian Gulf countries on a later stage, which would bring them closer to Iran, thus the existing differences between Iran and Persian Gulf region would be abridged amicably. Depending upon the level of cooperation, the existing dependency on western weapon system by these countries could also be reduced in a future scenario. For the provision of technical expertise, China could also be incorporated in the joint venture of defense production as a partner.

(d) **Stabilization of Afghanistan.** Afghan Government and people should be taken into confidence by redressing their years old grievances with Iran and Pakistan. Through their cooperation, Iran and Pakistan must contribute in the re construction of the war-ridden country. This step would help in stabilizing the region and minimizing the chances of sporadic violence of each other's territorial limits. Moreover, this would also keep the extra regional forces away from the region. In the reconciliation process, each state must respect the national interests without compromising the Afghan interests. The nut results should be that; **'diplomacy must get supremacy over the rhetoric and peace over the conflict'**.

(e) **Cooperating Apparatus.** Think tanks, academia, and media are some useful means that can play a very positive role in bringing Iran and Pakistan closer to each other. Scholars must visit each other's country more frequently. The existing level of people-to-people contact must be enhanced for the development of confidence among the masses. The platform of the ECO should be mobilized for the regional interaction, economic harmony, and overall prosperity of the region. Over and above, the existing low profiled security and confidence building measures need to be set off on war footings.

(f) **Private Business Sector'.** One of the keys to success is the involvement

of 'Private Business Sector' through provision of ease of doing business, with fair and clear guidelines, loans, and incentives to do business with Iran. Facilities like banking, infrastructure, and security can help far more than the direct intervention of the government itself.

(g) Lack of Banking facility is one of the major causes of small scale of trade. Pakistan should negotiate with Iran to decrease tariff on its exports for a given period, so that Pakistan could achieve some balance in mutual trade. In addition, low tariffs can also discourage smuggling.

(h) Gwadar and Chabahar ports can work together as complements to each other and more partners in CPEC would also mean less monopoly of China. Business development will also provide jobs and revenue to Pakistan.

7. Conclusion

48. Considering the historical references, the current situation, and the ground realities, there is no way that Pakistan and Iran would continue living in seclusion. More so, their divergences are of insignificant nature hence can be alleviated with mutual consent. Both are the prominent and leading countries of the Islamic World. Harmony and synchronization among Tehran and Islamabad would act as a bridge in bringing the dotted Muslim World together, which is the need of hour. In their bi-lateral relationship, they have to shun their minor differences, created by external forces, indeed friends to none or because of their vested interests, centered elsewhere. Adoption of a joint strategy for the security of common border, trust building, and increase in the volume of bi-lateral trade through economic cooperation would act as the catalyst in bringing them together. Failure to reconcile would provide space to extra regional countries and non-state actors to exploit both countries in the areas of respective weaknesses.

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