

Study Regarding the Pakistan and Iran Relations

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Abstract

Pakistan enjoys good relations with Iran since the partition of sub-continent. Both the countries have successful agreements regarding the different socio-economic fields. Relations between Iran and Pakistan have spanned since the common prehistoric Indo-Iranian heritage. The Western region of Pakistan was one part of the easternmost satrap's provinces of Persian Empire which included the areas of Satraps provinces of present-day Pakistan. Even as of today, many antique and historic buildings in Pakistan have classical Persian writings on manuscript of the buildings. After the establishment of Pakistan on August 1947, Iran has a unique distinction of being the first country to internationally recognize the status of Pakistan. As of current, each is the other's chief economic partner and large-scale tourism and migration between the two nations has increased rapport. This cooperation would continue throughout the Cold war with Iran supporting Pakistan in its conflicts with arch-rival, India. In return, Pakistan went on to support Iran militarily during the Iran–Iraq War in 1980s. Since 2000, the relations between each state have been normalized and economical and military collaboration has strengthened the relations ever since.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent difficulties have included repeated trade disputes, influence of sphere, and political position. While Pakistan's foreign policy maintains balance relations with Saudi Arabia, United States and the European Union, Iran tends to warn against it and raised concern including the Pakistan's absolute backing of Taliban during the fourth phase of civil war in Afghanistan during the last ending years of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the economic and trade relations continued to expanded in both absolute and relative terms, and relations were immensely improved in 1999 that led the subsequent signing of a Free Trade Agreement between the two countries. At present, both countries are cooperating and forming alliance against a number of areas of mutual interest on fighting drug trade along their common border as well as defeating Afghan supported tribal insurgency along their border. They are both members of the Developing 8 Countries group of countries as well as the Economic Cooperation Organization and are also both observers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Aziz Babar, 2012).

Iran occupies a respected and popular view among Pakistanis; with 76% of overwhelming majority of Pakistanis have favorable view of Iran, making Pakistan the most pro-Iran nation in the world. In the Baluchistan region in the southeast of Iran and in the southwest of Pakistan, the Balochi people travel regularly, often without visas, causing considerable problems for the Iranian national guards as well as Pakistan's border security force (Frontier Corps Baluchistan). Since 2010, there has been an increase in friendship between the two nations with senior figures from both governments meeting each other as both countries work together to find a regional solution to the Afghan War and progress on talks over a proposed gas pipeline and an ECO.

The treaty of friendship's some of the clauses were geopolitical. Quickly, Pakistan found a natural partner in Iran after the Indian government chose to support Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser who sought to export a pan-Arab ideology that threatened many Arab monarchies, a number of which were favored by the Iranian shah. Harsh V. Pant, a foreign policy writer, noted that Iran was a natural ally and model for Pakistan for other reasons as well. Both countries granted the each other the MFN status for trade purposes; the shah offered Iranian oil and gas to Pakistan on generous terms, and the Iranian and Pakistani armies cooperated to suppress the rebel movement in Baluchistan. During the Shah's era, Iran moved closer to Pakistan in many fields and the two nations worked closely with each other. Pakistan, Iran and Turkey joined the United States-sponsored Central Treaty Organization defense treaty which extended along the Soviet Union's southern perimeter. Iran played an important role in Indo-Pakistani war in 1965 and its qualified nurses, medical supplies, and a gift of 5,000 tons of petroleum and indicated that it was considering an embargo on oil supplies to India for the duration of the fighting. India blatantly believed Iran that it had supplied oil free of cost to Pakistan. After the suspension of the United States' military aid to Pakistan, Iran was reported to have purchased 90 Sabre Jet Fighters from West Germany and to have sent them to Pakistan (Rouhollah, 1975).

Iran again played a vital role in Pakistan's 1971 conflict with India, this time, Iran helped sheltered Pakistan's military depot and equipment. Iran initially became shocked after hearing the news of surrendering its eastern armed forces to India in 1971. During the 1971 war with India, Pakistan received full military and

diplomatic support from Iran against India, with Shah of Iran calling Indian attack as an "aggression" and the Indian action as interference in Pakistan's domestic affairs. In an interview with a local newspaper in Paris, Shah of Iran openly acknowledged that: "We are opposed to all interference in its (Pakistan's) internal affairs, we are hundred percent behind Pakistan". The Iranian Prime Minister Amir-Abbas Hoveida also toed his ruler's line and said that: "Pakistan was being subjected to violence and force." Although Iran maintained a Pro-Pakistan policy, Iran tried again and again to make it clear that it did not want the dismemberment of Pakistan because that would have adversely affected the domestic stability and security of Iran (Aziz Babar, 2012). The breakup of Pakistan would also encourage Kurds separatists in Iran to rise up against the Iranian government and thus jeopardize the security of Iran. In the same vein, Iran tried to justify the supply of arms to Pakistan on the ground that in its desperation Pakistan may fall into the Chinese lap. On the other hand, Iran changed its foreign priorities after making a move to maintain good relations with India (Max Fisher, 2013).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan sees Iran as an important neighbor that has geo-strategic location and with which people of Pakistan share common faith, history. Iran, therefore, is a key element in Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan believes that maintenance of cordial ties with Iran is important for the regional economic prosperity and security. Pakistan-Iran close relations are a source of strength not only for both the countries but also for the region.

2.1 Pak-Iran Cooperation at Pakistan-Iran Relations

Iran is an important neighbor of Pakistan because of its geo-strategic location and bonds of common faith, history, culture and other deep-rooted links between the two countries. Iran, therefore, figures high in Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan-Iran close relations are a source of strength not only for both the countries but also for the region. Iran was one of the first few countries that recognized Pakistan soon after its independence. The two countries share perceptions on important regional and international issues and cooperate closely in multilateral fora including the UN, OIC, ECO and D-8. Although Pakistan and Iran have difference of opinion over Afghanistan, the two countries have similar interests in Afghanistan viz. cessation of hostilities, preservation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and return of millions of refugees to their homeland. Pak-Iran relations are marked by frequent contacts at the highest level, which provide focus and direction to the bilateral relationship.

2.2 Pakistan-Iran Joint Economic Commission

Pak-Iran economic relations are governed by Pakistan-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC), which was established in 1986. It provides a useful institutional framework in the identification of areas to promote economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries. It also periodically reviews and monitors the implementation of various decisions taken in this regard by the representatives of the two countries. The 11th session of the Pak-Iran Joint Economic Commission was held in Islamabad in March 1999. The Coordinators of Pakistan-Iran JEC met in Islamabad on April 26-28, 2000 to review implementation of the decisions taken during the 11th Session. The meeting concluded with signing of a MoU to implement the pending decisions promptly (Aziz Babar, 2012).

2.3 Pakistan Iran current relations:

Pakistan-Iran relations since 9/11 have considerably improved from earlier frostiness in the 1990s due to the Taliban factor in Afghanistan. Hence Pakistan is increasingly concerned that any harm or destabilization of Iran through any external military action may create problems not only for Iran but also for Pakistan. In this light, Pakistan has urged both countries to defuse the tense situation through mutual dialogue and consultations. While the Iranians seem to be adamant in pursuit of their nuclear program for perceived national interest, the US is aggressively pursuing its global agenda for "regime change" and re-shaping of the Middle East. In truth, Pakistan's role in US-Iran crisis is very limited as Pakistan has neither the clout nor the credibility to play any effective mediatory role as evidenced. On the one hand, there is a self-willed superpower that has a mind and agenda of its own, while on the other hand, there is Iran whose clerical leadership is equally inflexible and rigid with a history of US defiance for almost quarter a century (Rouhollah, 1975).

If the surgical strikes by the US or by Israel against Iran's nuclear installations, are going to complicate Pakistan's strategic problems. Not only refugees could flood into the border province of Baluchistan it would add to the tense situation as Baluchistan. Also, any military confrontation will place Pakistan in an awkward position of siding between a strategic ally and a traditional Muslim friend and a neighbor. Pakistan would be the last country to see Iran suffer or go down in any confrontation. The latter's destabilization could send shock waves of agitation in the Islamic world, especially Pakistan where anti-US sentiment is already simmering. Moreover, this will put added pressures on Musharraf government - already beset with a plethora of domestic problems (Max Fisher, 2013).

2.4 Gas Pipeline Project:

Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project is also in the doldrums as the US seems determined to pressurize and isolate Iran over the nuclear issue. The US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in her recent tour to India and Pakistan expressed US "concern" about the pipeline project and termed it as an act of "rewarding" Iran. Should Pakistan's security environment deteriorate, there is a real danger that India-Pak ongoing rapprochement may also suffer: a weakened and threatened Pakistan may be overly defensive and prove non-cooperative to India. Under these circumstances, it seems difficult for Pakistan to persuade Iran to revoke its nuclear program since it is considered cardinal to the latter's national security. After all, Pakistan too pursued in building its own nuclear program on putative national interests despite worldwide protestations. Moreover, the Iranian clerical leadership's survival and credibility will come under grater stake if it forswears its nuclear program (Rouhollah, 1975).

2.5 Baghdad Pact

One of the characteristic of small power behavior is to have closer relations with either a superpower or a great power so as to guard its security interests. David Vital has called this the "Pilot- Fish" behavior of keeping close to the shark to avoid being eaten. Given the geographic proximity of the Soviet Union to both Iran and Pakistan it seems logical to think that both these states would have tried to cultivate the friendship of the USSR. A change in Pakistan's policy came when the USA showed its disillusionment with India after India's Prime Minister visited Washington in 1949. Meanwhile Pakistan had received an invitation for its prime Minister for a visit to Moscow. A similar invitation was secured later from the United States. Pakistan's Prime Minister LiaquatAli Khan decided in favour of going to the United States. Two factors seem to have motivated this change of preference. One could be that Pakistan tried to exploit the disillusionment of US administration in winning over India to their anti-communist alliance system to its own benefit. The second factor could be the fact that the USA was both technologically and economically far ahead of the USSR in the late forties and the early fifties.

2.6 The Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD)

A small state has also possibilities for defending its interests against great power in bilateral relationships outside international institutional framework. They can also develop their regional institutions to safeguard their national interests (Rouhollah, 1975). The Regional Cooperation for Development, a tripartite agreement among Turkey, Iran and Pakistan for non-political cooperation, born in 1964, was one such regional arrangement came largely from Ayoub Khan, the President of Pakistan who was critical of the US acting as a "master" dictating terms against India rather than behaving as a "Friend" (Aziz Babar, 2012).

2.7 The India Factor in Pak - Iran Relations

As referred to earlier, Pakistan sought to cultivate the friendship of its Muslim neighbors in order to strengthen itself against India and gain diplomatic support over various issues against India in the UN. In the late forties and fifties Iran was not hostile to India but it was clearly more friendly towards Pakistan. It was the first Muslim country to recognize Pakistan.¹² Iran gave diplomatic support to Pakistan over Kashmir, the most crucial test of a country's friendship in the eyes of Pakistan. In the Iranian Parliament Kashmir was discussed as an "inseparable part of Pakistan". Deputy Speaker, Sayed Ahmed Sarai said: We believe the decision of the Security Council should be binding, and the Kashmir issue settled through plebiscite under the auspices of United Nations. It is, however, regrettable that India on the one hand criticized even defense arrangements as envisaged in the Baghdad Pact and on the other hand believed in the outmoded maxim of might is right (Rouhollah, 1975).

2.8 Time Tested Friend

The first instance of military assistance from Iran to Pakistan was the 1965 Indo-Pak War. Iran considered the defence of Pakistan its own defence. Abdur Rasul Azimi, the editor or *Paigham-ilmroze* clearly stated that "Iran came out to help Pakistan against Indian aggression with full consciousness that it was helping the defense. The official Iranian circle also confirmed this. A statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Minister declared that Iran was concerned about India's aggression against Pakistan, a fraternal Muslim Nation.' Iran's supply of arms to Pakistan was no secret. YB Chavan, India's Minister for Defence informed the Rajya Sabha on 2nd August 1965 that besides China, Iran and Turkey were also supplying arms to Pakistan.' In response to earlier Indian statements, the Shah of Iran had accepted the fact that Iran was supplying arms to Pakistan. He had also justified his stand on the ground that had Iran not helped Pakistan with arms, Pakistan would have certainly jumped into the Chinese lap (Max Fisher, 2013).

2.9 War of 1971 and Iranian Response

Pakistan received full military and diplomatic support from Iran again in the 1971 war against India. Iran called

Indian attack as an "aggression" and the Indian action as interference in Pakistan's domestic affairs. The Shah of Iran in an interview to a Paris paper openly acknowledged, "We are opposed to all interference in its (Pakistan's) internal affairs, we are hundred per cent behind Pakistan".²¹ The Iranian Prime Minister also toed his ruler's line and said that "Pakistan was being subjected to violence and force". Iran's attitude and actions in both the Indo-Pak wars show that though Iran was pro-Pakistan, it was hesitant in totally spoiling its relations with India. The Kurds in Iran would be encouraged to rise up against the Iranian government and thus jeopardize the security of Iran. In the same vein, Iran tried to justify the supply of arms to Pakistan on the ground that in its desperation Pakistan may fall into the Chinese lap. Further, as a positive proof of their continuing good relations with India, Iran did not either stop or slow down the flow of oil supplies to India. During the later oil crisis too, Iran did not create much financial hardship (Aziz Babar, 2012).

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