

The Vicissitudes of Pak-Iran Relations from 1947 to the Present Time

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Abstract

The research intends to investigate Iran-Pakistan economic and political links since 1947 and the issues/differences that affected the relations between them. Both Pakistan Iran have a long standing historical, cultural and religious ties. Persian literature and language have had a great impact on Sub-Continent's cultural and educational milieu. During the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, the relations between Pakistan and Iran were friendly but after the Islamic revolution of 1979 Pakistan tilted towards Saudi Arabia for its own interests. The ideological dimensions of foreign policy of both the countries also marred the friendly relations. Iran has some apprehensions that border violations and subversions carried out inside Iran are with the connivance of US. The paper has mainly adopted qualitative methods. The study recommends that Pakistan can increase trade and diplomatic relations with Iran to take advantage of resource rich country. The minor differences between the two countries can also be tackled through trade and diplomacy.

Keywords: border, culture, foreign relations, Iran, History, Pakistan,

Introduction

The has been changes and up and downs in Pakistan-Iran relations due to circumstances of the time or the new varied developments in the region. There are sound historical, cultural religious and geographical reasons that bind Pakistan and Iran to have friendly and advantageous relations with each other. In fact, geographical positioning and a long-standing border between the two neighbors obliges them to have mutually beneficial relations. Since the beginning Of Pakistan there developed a triangular relationship amongst USA, Pakistan and Iran and both Pakistan and Iran were part of American sponsored military and strategic alliance. In lieu of this alliance, both the countries received massive military and economic aid. Therefore, since Pakistan's inception and from General Ayub Khan and General Yahya's time (1958-69 and 1971) when Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi was at the helm in Iran, the relations of the two countries were cordial. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto from December 1971 to

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July 1971 brought a new dimension to it and developed personal relationship with the Shah. By stretching the first phase of Pak-Iran relations until 1979 (end of Shah's rule), we can confidently state that ties between the two countries were cordial.

In the second phase that is after 1979 Iranian revolution, there remained a distrust and little warmth in relations of the two countries. The priorities of both the countries changed and Pakistan tilted more towards Saudi Arabia. In the context of Afghanistan, Pakistan allowed its territory to be used against the Soviets and in the 1990s both the countries used their own proxies in Afghanistan. Ideologically, Iran was more vehement against US and Israel and tried to export its own brand of Islam while Pakistan at the time of Zia ul-Haq had a pragmatic foreign policy where ideology was given a lip service. Therefore, Pakistan and Iran didn't see eye to eye on Afghanistan and Pakistan changed its position towards Saudi Arabia and US.

The border land between Pakistan and Iran is undisputed and there are no territorial or hegemonic claims by any of them. However, skirmishes occur between the Iranian forces and non-state actors/smugglers. But these irritants are generally curbed by the border forces of the two countries and they do not drive a wedge between two countries or people on both sides of the border. Pakistan and Iran are facing enormous economic challenges – Pakistan because of it is energy starved while Iran is hard pressed under external economic sanctions. The trade between the two countries is miserably low except some commodities are smuggled. What is needed is to boost up the trade between the two countries. For this Gwadar and Chabahar ports could be well utilized for trade which could also cater to the needs of Central Asia as well.

Research Questions

- How have Iran and Pakistan's economic and political relations evolved since 1947?
- What are the minor issues/differences that hampered better relations between Iran and Pakistan?

Literature Review

(1) Solidarity and Parting of Ways between Iran and Pakistan

“Over seven decades, Pakistan-Iran relations have seen both great attachment and separation. Opposition and collaboration have been consistent aspects of Iran-Pakistan ties for six decades.” (Kaleji, 2012, p.143). There was a period in Pakistan-Iran ties when there were strong feelings of solidarity and confidence between the two countries. It was due

to the leaders of both countries' religious, cultural, and linguistic similarity, as well as their shared objectives. Alex Vatanka writes, "The depth of Iran's previously major status in Pakistani society may be seen in a variety of facets of life in that country, from language and tradition, spirituality, and even the most basic representation of national identity." (Vatanka, 2017, p.5). During Reza Shah Pahlavi's reign, relations between the two countries grew stronger and evolved in the context of Cold War politics. Countries come together when their interests converge and drift apart when their interests diverge, according to a frequent cliché in international relations.

The role of leadership in both nations' foreign policies has played a part in the convergence and divergence of relations between Pakistan and Iran over the years. Fred Halliday writes, "Where nations authoritarian, or where dialogue is severely restricted, such latitude for governments to manage foreign policy appears to be higher." (Halliday, 2005, p.51).

(2) The Role of Ideology in Iran-Pakistan Relations

Foreign policy is heavily influenced by ideology. It claims to represent the truth, a worldview, and future goals. "These primary components of ideology act as a filter by which planners see the international system and its characteristics." (Rizvi, 1983, p.48). One of the major issues has been the importance of ideology in Iran and Pakistan's foreign policies. Both nations' foreign policies were based on Islamic theology, with some pragmatism thrown in for good measure.

Pakistan and Iran's early relations were based on mutual interests rather than a shared philosophy. It is often assumed that Islamic doctrine triumphed with the 1979 Islamic revolution. "From 1981 until 1989, Iran's foreign policy appeared to be directed by ideological mandates, with moments of required flexibility. The foreign policy perspective of Khomeini was, "Neither East nor West, but the Islamic Republic," as well as his fixation on exporting the Islamic Revolution, derived from his overarching desire to establish an Islamic-led international order." (Ramazani, 2004, p.555). Despite its harsh position, the Iranian leadership was forced to turn to pragmatism during the Iran-Iraq conflict, which resulted in the Iran-Contra scandal. Despite the Iranian regime's numerous foreign policy errors since the revolution, many scholars have depicted it as a fully rational player.

"When other factors impacting foreign policy collide with ideological demands, the ideological approach produces problems." (Rizvi, 1983, p.48). The difficulty for a State occurs when it perceives

itself the bearer of a particular 'truth' and strives to force its worldview both internally and internationally. "The ideological implications of the Islamic revolution, as well as its strategy of revolution exportation, drew her into confrontation with neighboring nations. When a state attempts to promote a particular ideological philosophy, it inherently rejects other states. Because all identities are constructed by pitting oneself against the other, the Pakistani fundamentalist Sunni identity identified itself as the antithesis of Shi'a revolutionary Iran, that became the other." (Kaleji, 2012, p.146).

(3) Iran-Pakistan and the Intervention of Great Powers

Despite the end of Colonialism and Imperialism, one of the challenges of emerging nations has been the continuous meddling of big nations in both domestic and foreign affairs. The competition between the United Kingdom and the Russia has been supplanted by the United States' persistent meddling in Iranian affairs. Alex Vatanka writes, "Traditionally, three overarching priorities have guided US policy in the Middle East: the protection of Israel; the regular and unrestrained access of energy from the area to the West; and the prevention of challenges to US influence both inside the Middle East and worldwide." (Vatanka, 2017, p.2).

The decreasing dominance of the United Kingdom in the Middle East following World War II, along with the onset of the Cold War, prompted the United States to intervene in Middle Eastern politics. During Reza Shah Pahlavi's reign, US-Iran ties grew, causing dissatisfaction and the Iranian revolution changed the relationship, and American dominance in Iran shrank. "The hostage incident, the Iran-Iraq War, and the continuation of US restrictions have led to antagonism between the two nations that seems no indications of abating. The skepticism is reinforced by past encounters, as well as the notion that the US and its allies attempt to exclude the Islamic Republic whenever feasible." (Tabatabai & Samuel, p-4). "Despite overlapping priorities and possibly fixable issues of conflict between the U.S and a key regional player, Washington and Tehran lack diplomatic ties, and are seeking distinct strategic agendas." (Bahgat, 2009, p.95).

The US-Pakistan relationship has been tumultuous since Pakistan's creation in 1947. "When Pakistan attained independence in August 1947, few observers expected the trajectory of this partnership, which has swerved between alliance closeness and cordiality and moments of conflict and strain, but has also experienced periods of standoffishness and disinterest." (Kux, 2000, p.359). During the early Cold War, the expansion of Communism was the primary aim for the United States, but

India was viewed as Pakistan's major opponent. "During the Cold War (1954-1972), the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets (1979-1989), and the war on terrorism, the United States engaged Pakistan as a partner three times, largely for geopolitical reasons (2001-present)" (Haqqani, 2015, p.3).

"In the absence of a broader and more consistent convergence of security aims, US-Pakistan ties have lacked a firm foundation of shared strategic interests." (Kux, 2000, p.360). The Common Alliance, which was formed by SEATO and CENTO, also pushed Iran and Pakistan nearer to each other. The United States' financial and military assistance to both nations enabled the easy operation of both countries' matters, and they remain dedicated to opposing the Soviet Union. Regardless of Pakistan's flirtation with China and Iran's involvement with India, the two nations will always be drawn to the United States. The dramatic incidents after Iran's Islamic revolution turned making the nation into an isolated state, whereas Pakistan's relationship with the US remained with ups and downs.

Research Methodology

The research is descriptive in character and is based on qualitative research. The research is also historical in nature. The study relied heavily on primary and secondary data. Books, the internet, research articles, periodicals, newspapers, and archives are the primary sources of secondary data. The original study was largely gathered through interviews with academics and faculty members, although speeches by notable Iranian and Pakistani leaders were also evaluated at various points in history. However, locating original material on Iran and Pakistan is challenging since most of the correspondence between the two nations throughout the years has been preserved in official offices and is difficult to get.

Historical, Cultural and Religious Ties between Pakistan (falling in South Asia) and Iran (Persia)

Pakistan is contiguous to Iran and has historical, cultural and religious ties with its neighbor Iran since ancient times. Historically, the Civilization of Iran dates back to the 6th century BC. (Iran- Encyclopedia Britannica, P 50-51). When Muslim Arabs vanquished the Sassanids (Persians) in 636 A.D., Persian civilization incorporated many important aspects of Islamic/Arabic civilization. (Iran- Encyclopedia Britannica 55-56). Therefore, Islam contributed to Persian identity and culture and the

Persian literature. “During the Muslim rule in India Persian was taught in Madrassas/Makhtabs. The major role of Persian language in courts and offices in South Asia resulted in the formation of a huge population who imparted Persian ideas and traditions to Indians in subjects ranging from Poetry and Philosophy to many others. The Mughals also designated Persian the primary language of India until the British established English the national language in 1843.” (Vatanka, p 8-9). For the previous 500 years, when the Safavid Shia dynasty acquired power in Iran, many Iranians fled to South Asia for economic or religious reasons.

The legacy of Persian culture is still visible in Pakistan and Ejaz Akram delineates the Persian zone of influence in Pakistan as: “much of Pakistan is considered as a part of the Indian sub-continent at least the lands that are in the east of river Indus. The other half of Pakistan, which is West of the river Indus, belongs ecumenically to the Persian zone of culture. It is important to point out that the Persian zone of culture does not stop abruptly at the Indus, it continues to extend through the Punjab into North India” (p-227).

Much of Iranian culture and language was absorbed by South Asia, and prominent South Asian poets such as Ghalib and Iqbal composed magnificent poetry in Persian. Intellectuals and researchers in South Asia continue to enjoy reading Persian ancient poets such as Saadi, Hafiz, Khayam, and Rumi. The Pakistan’s national anthem is full of Persian words and jargons. There is much appreciation for Persian/Iranian culture and poetry in Pakistan. However, a declining trend is seen for Persian language and literature in Pakistan schools and colleges. The strong historical, cultural and religious identities could be used as a catalyst for better relations between Pakistan and Iran.

Geography and the Borderland between Pakistan and Iran

Geography is an important factor in shaping the foreign policy of a country with its neighbor country. The long standing 900 km border between Pakistan and Iran stretches over a vast deserted land where the terrain on both sides of the border is harsh with scarcity of water. The border is also very far from Pakistan and Iran’s capitals and financial centres. “In the 1880s, the British Commissioner – Sir Frederic J. Goldsmith was tasked with demarking Persia’s boundary with British India and Afghanistan. Since then, very minimal alterations to the border line have been made, and an understanding was struck with both Pakistan and Iran in 1958 on the premise of this boundary.” (Vatanka, P-16).

“Because of its desolation, deserts, and difficult terrain, American researcher Louis Dupree dubbed the three-cornered territory between Iran,

Pakistan, and Afghanistan the "Empty Triangle." (Vatanka, p-38). Today empty triangle is used as a conduit for drugs by heavily armed narco-smugglers to Iran and ahead. These smugglers sometimes ambush Iranian border patrol and create misgivings about Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan relations. Besides the drug smugglers cheap Iranian petrol/diesel is also smuggled into Pakistan and Afghanistan (Baloch & Iashari, 2021)

Pakistan and Iran both have access to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf which are of great strategic importance. The evolving hot water ports of Gwadar (Pakistan) and Chahbahar (Iran), which are close to the Hormuz stretch, are expanding ports of great strategic and economic significance. These ports could be an outlet to the sea to Central Asian states. But there is conflict of interests and rivalry between China/Pakistan and India/USA on Gwadar port.

Unlike Pakistan India or Pakistan and Afghanistan, there are no sovereignty or hegemonic conflicts between the two countries and border security is managed by both the countries. Whenever, Iranian border is closed for security reasons, the people on both sides of border suffer much because their cross-border movement is restricted and their livelihood is threatened.

People on the Pakistani border near Iran rely on Iran for commodities including oil, gas, and basic necessities. Iran also supplies power to Pakistani Baluchistan's border districts. This service might be expanded to other Baluchistan Districts like as Chaghi, Washuk, Kharan, and Makran Division. When the Iranians seal the border for one reason or another, the people within the Pakistani border face famine. The open and simple movement of Labour and people across countries is required.

America, Pakistan and Iran- A Triangular Relationship

The United States influenced the peace making in Pakistan and Iran from 1950s until 1979. By peacemaking we mean that it was United States that brought the two countries together to fight Communism. However, Pakistan continued to be a frontline State in America's war against Soviet Union in Afghanistan in 1980's and after 9/11/2001 Pakistan provided the platform for American air strikes against Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Pakistan and Iran also needed American aid and arms and ammunition for their security as Pakistan faced a hostile India and Iran, feared Communism and Arab nationalism of the time. (Pollack, p-46). Security was the dominant concern of Pakistan and Iran.

"Pakistan and Iran joined American sponsored and British led Baghdad Pact in 1955 which was later named as Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)" (Vatanka, p-18). Pakistan received from

America great diplomatic, financial and military support and since its inception up till 2005 US assistance to Pakistan equaled \$15 billion and from 2002 onwards over a billion dollars were given to Pakistan (Amin, p-44). “Iran too received about \$500 million American military assistance between 1953 and 1961 while between 1972 and 1977, Iran spent more than \$16 billion on sophisticated arms which was one third of American weapons sales” (Pollack, p 76,77,109). Thus, US influence, geographic location and geo-politics during the Cold war led to close ties between Pakistan and Iran and they received much American military aid.

“Pakistan during the 1960s allowed the US to use Peshawar as a base for spy planes against the Soviet Union and its U-2 spy plane was shot in the Soviet air and its pilot Gary power was arrested” (Sattar, p-58). However, America didn’t come forward to help Pakistan during its wars with India. “The Shah of Iran was also dubious of US backing for Iran because his partner Pakistan was not aided by the US during the 1965 and 1971 conflicts.” (Pollack, p-97).

“After the Iranian revolution of 1979, Iran resorted to a free path and vehemently criticized the US and called her as Shaitun-i- bozorg (Big Satan) while USSR was called as small Satan i.e., Shaitun-i- Kuchik” (Halliday, p-105). But Pakistan after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 became a frontline State and ally of US against Soviet Union in Afghanistan (Ahmed, p-57). “After 1979, Iran’s relations with U.S were broken and Pakistan’s foreign policy with Iran were made complicated by US. Iran was on the path of exporting Shia Islam. In order to halt the influence of Shia Iran, Wahabi Islam was encouraged as a State policy during Zia’s time” (Siddiqui, p-145). After 11 Sept. 2001 Musharraf had a strategic partnership with USA and supported the US attack on Taliban. Although most of the time Pakistan was in American camp but their relations were not always harmonious.

Pakistan – Iran’s relations during Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi’s time

Pakistan and Iran’s foreign policy relations broadly can be divided into two phases. The first phase starts from 1950s to 1979 and the second phase begins after the Iranian revolution from 1979 till the present date. Both Iran and Pakistan had secular leaders like Shah of Iran, Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and their policies were mostly West oriented. Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan in May 1949 and Treaty of Friendship was signed with Pakistan and Iran in May 1950 (Vatanka, p 5,15).

“During the 1965 India-Pakistan War, Iran upheld Pakistan with arms and ammo and Pakistani planes utilized Iranian bases for take-off

(Mehmood, p-131). During the war of 1971, the Shah breached US law and provided American armaments to Pakistan.” (Pollack, p-105). RCD, which began in 1965 and eventually became ECO (10-member countries), was a wonderful sign of goodwill between Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. “At the time, all three countries were secular, centralized and pro-west. When a leftist takeover occurred in Iraq on 14 July 1958, the Shah became concerned for his rule and urged Pakistan's President Ayub for a union between Pakistan and Iran. Although this concept did not materialize and remained on the planning board until the mid-1970s,” (Vatanka, p-29). In truth, Shah was nervous about his reign because he had previously been exiled when Mosaddeq seized office in 1953.

When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power in Pakistan in Dec. 1971, the relations between the Shah and Bhutto in the beginning were very cordial. When there was insurgency in Balochistan in 1970s, the Shah stood with Bhutto. “In May 1973, during his visit to Iran, Bhutto cooled down Shah’s fears about the situation in Balochistan and got additional assistance from the Shah” (Raza, p-229). On the surface there seemed to be very good relations between Shah and Bhutto but in reality, things were not going on very well. “Shah had a patronizing attitude towards Pakistan as Iran had gotten rich because of Petro-dollars. Shah and his family had a supercilious demeanor which in the end culminated to the downfall of Shah” (Raza, p 229, 230). However, the relations during Shah’s time with Pakistan were friendly and many industrial projects were installed in Pakistan with Iranian help. But after the Shah no visible material support or concessions in oil could be extended to Pakistan. However, we can say that in the first phase of Pakistan and Iran relations i.e., upto Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi’s time the role of ideology was minimum.

Pakistan-Iran Relations after the Iranian Revolution of 1979

After a stint of almost good relations between Pakistan and Iran during Shah’s time, there appeared some frictions after the Iran revolution of 1979. The Shia-Sunni conflict of Pakistani soil had a little damaging effect on relations between the two countries but this was not openly expressed. Although Khomeini and Zia-ul-Haq were advocates of Islam but they had their own Islamic agenda. It is said that Iran and Saudi Arabia covertly funded their own type of radicals in Pakistan, which resulted in carnage and mayhem against Shias, much to the displeasure of Pakistanis. (Ahmed, 2012). “Pakistan stayed quiet so as not to irritate both nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, where Pakistan's objectives are most important. The Shia-Sunni problem is still looming large in Pakistan and General Assad Durrani- a former Pakistani ambassador to Saudi Arabia confesses

that Pakistan is paying a heavy price due to Saudi funding to extremists in Pakistan” (Vatanka, p-244). Zia-ul Haq’s tilt towards Saudi Arabia and Gulf States was obvious as he supported Afghan Mujahideen with American/ Saudi finances. Today, Pakistan and Iran relations on Sunni-Shia issue are tense. According to Ahmed Rashid, “If Pakistan sends troops to Arab countries, it will escalate the Sectarian (Sunni-Shia) tension in Pakistan (Rashid, p-204). As a whole, Pakistan and Iran relations after 1979 i.e., in the 2nd phase remained lukewarm and very little diplomatic and friendly overtures were made.

Pakistan-Iran Relations in the Context of Afghanistan

In the 1980s Pakistan was committed to allow the Mujahideen to use its territory on the behest of U.S. In the Pakistan and Iran during the 1990s acted by proxy in Afghanistan and their relations remained at lowest ebb. Iran supported the Shias and non-Pakhtun elements (like Ahmed Shah Masud) while Pakistan fully helped Pashtun dominated Taliban. “When Pakistan recognized the Taliban regime, the relations between Pakistan and Iran were further strained” (Jalal, p-79). “The motive for Taliban support by Pakistan was to have a strategic depth in Afghanistan and from there to go forward and have an influence in Central Asia” (Fatemi, p-79).

“In September 1998, despite Pakistan’s assurance about the safety of Iranian diplomats at Mazar-i-Sharif, the Taliban went ahead and killed the Iranians; this resulted in escalation of tension between the two countries” (Hunter, p-148). Iran carried on blaming Pakistan for the incident in its media and reduced the diplomatic mission in Islamabad, therefore the relations between Pakistan and Iran were further strained (Vatanka, p-217). “Since Pakistan supported Taliban in the 1990’s therefore Iran tilted towards India which led to the joint construction of Iranian port of Chahbahar” (Ahmed, p-36). The Pakistan and Iran’s foreign policy on Afghanistan is still diverging and they are not on the same page.

Ideological dimensions of Pakistan and Iran’s Foreign Policy

National interest and geo-politics of a country generally predominates the foreign policy of a country but in case of Pakistan and Iran, there is also an ideological dimension to it. Both Pakistan and Iran name their countries as ‘Islamic Republics’ but they have their own school of thought about Islam i.e., Sunni majority Pakistan and Shia majority Iran. As far as Pakistan is concerned, it aligned itself from 1954 to 1962 with both Islamic as well as Western countries for economic aid and security

purposes (Akram, p-159). Discussing Pakistan, Shireen T. Hunter puts the ideological aspects of Pakistan's Foreign Policy as:

In the first three decades of Pakistan's existence, Jinnah's vision has largely prevailed, though Islam remains the country's most dominant generator of identity and culture. By the late 1960s, Islam had become an extremely powerful force in Pakistan's domestic matters and foreign relations.

“In 1973 Arab-Israeli war Zulfikar Ali Bhutto showed solidarity with the Arabs and provided material and political support to the Arabs” (Raza, p-228). In February 1974 (during Bhutto's time) only the Shah of Iran did not attend the Islamic Summit in Lahore, which was attended by thirty-eight Muslim countries. “When Khomeini came to power, he emphasized on ‘dar al Islam’ in foreign policy and priority was given to Islamic faith than the national interest. He transformed nationalism (Millat-e-Islam) into the idea of Islam (Ummat-e-Islam) and the word nationalism, which he considered to be a Western concept.” (Mackey, p-309-10). Iran supports Palestinians and Hizballah in Lebanon against Israel which indicates an ideological dimension of Iran's foreign policy. Both Iran and Pakistan not only determine their foreign policy on self interest but they have their enemies and friends on ideological basis as well. Pakistan and Iran are members of Organization of Islamic countries (OIC) and could play an active role in forging good relations amongst Muslim countries. In a nutshell we can say that Pakistan's foreign policy has been pragmatic and based on national interest where ideology didn't play a significant role while in Iran pragmatism and ideology went hand in hand.

Minor Differences between Pakistan and Iran

“In the bordering areas of Pakistan and Iran rare skirmishes and gun-fires occur. Mostly clashes take place between Iranian forces and smugglers in the bordering areas of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The real tension ensued between Pakistan and Iran and US when in 2006 Jundullah having a force of about 1000 militants resorted to subversion in Iran” (Mabon, p-163). Afterwards, General Kayani completed the Jundullah sanctuaries in Pakistan, while Abdul Malik Reki, the Jundullah head of the group, was arrested and executed by Iranians (Rashid, p-199). "In this regard, Iran's answer was to help various Taliban forces in order to oppose US dominance in the area." (ibid-). Pakistan has also complaints against India's consulate in Zahedan near Pakistani border” (Vatanka, p-235). This has shaken the trust between the two countries and Iran has tilted more towards India.

Pakistan and Iran's relations are presently lukewarm and Pakistan's interests incline towards Saudi Arabia. The Shia-Sunni proxy war in Pakistan on behalf of Saudi Arabia is also the cause of friction between Pakistan and Iran. What is needed is to iron out the differences between the two countries by keeping in view the mutual interests of both the countries.

Pakistan and Iran relations on the Economic Front

On the economic front, not many advances have been made between Pakistan and Iran despite the fact that both countries were members of RCD (now ECO). RCD (comprising of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey) was in fact forerunner of ECO and was launched with fanfare in 1965 with great prospects of trade and development. "Many projects were formulated by RCD but it could achieve very little particularly in the field of trade and industry (Akram, p-80). ECO replaced RCD in 1985 but became fully operational in 1992 when independent Central Asian States joined it. Now ECO comprises of ten-member states but it has not been successful" (Akram, p-83, 97). The ECO countries have many resources in oil and gas and other mineral resources and requires vigorous trade and co-operation.

According to a conservative estimate "the size of trade between Pakistan and Iran is hardly one billion dollars per year and on the other hand the trade between Afghanistan and Iran is two billion dollars per year" (Vatanka, p-257). This indicates that the trade between Pakistan and Iran is dismal while Iran has abundance of oil and gas and both Pakistan and Iran are linked through rail, road and sea. American led sanctions against Iran have also created a dismal trade situation between Pakistan and Iran. A case in point is the Pak-Iran gas pipeline which could have tremendous opportunity for energy starved Pakistan but it was stifled by US. "The agreement for the project was signed in March 2009 and its cost was envisaged as \$75 billion dollars" (Vatanka, p-252). Iran completed its portion of the project while Pakistan is procrastinating without clarifying the matter.

Gwadar (Pakistan) and Chabahar (Iran) are two emerging and contesting ports and are being developed by China and India respectively. CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) which is expected to develop Gwadar as a container shipping hub and connectivity is based on Chinese soft loans and grants of \$46 billion (which has now been enhanced to \$60 billion) (Banyan, p-24). Pakistan sees Chabahar's road and rail link to Central Asia as a challenge to her commercial interests at Gwadar as a zero-sum game (Vatanka, p-248). Both Pakistan and Iran could utilize

Gwadar and Chahbahar and can improve the prospects for trade and co-operation in the light of July 2015 – P 5+1 nuclear agreement wherein trade sanctions on Iran were eased. Pakistan can clinch the opportunity by purchasing cheaper oil and gas from Iran. Facing enormous difficulties both Pakistan and Iran could come out of vulnerable economic and diplomatic isolation, once they boost up their trade and cordial relations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to investigate Iran-Pakistan economic and political interactions since 1947 and the factors that led to strained relations between them. The early leadership of Pakistan were mostly of secular outlook; therefore, they had a natural affiliation with the Shah of Iran. The historical, cultural and religious ties were conducive to strong relations between Pakistan and Iran. The Cold War triangular relations amongst US, Pakistan and Iran were in disarray after 1979 and Iran took a U-turn and completely disassociated itself from American camp. General Zia ul-Haq, who came to power through a military coup d'état yearned for an Islamic State in Pakistan but couldn't develop far-reaching ties with Iran. Internally, both Khomeini and Zia ul-Haq wanted to Islamize their countries but their world view and foreign policies were quite different. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and after 9/11, Pakistan went a long way as a front-line State for American wars in Afghanistan. Therefore, during President Zia and President Musharraf's rule, Pakistan and Iran's relations were far from cordial. Pakistan and Iran's relations were also tense when Iran felt that subversion in Iran was carried out by Jundullah from Pakistani soil. Pakistan's close ties with Saudi Arabia and Saudi clandestine support to Wahabis in Pakistan were looked by Iran with suspicion hence cold relations ensued between the two countries. There was divergence in the foreign policies of the two countries and Pakistan's interests rested more with Saudi Arabia, Gulf and the U.S.

The long-standing border between the two countries is undisputed, however border violations need to be addressed. The American sanctions against Iran affected the trade relations between Pakistan and Iran and the Pak-Iran gas pipe-line project was suspended. After the P 5+1 nuclear agreement, most of the trade sanctions against Iran were removed therefore Pakistan could clinch the opportunity to increase

its economic and diplomatic relations with Iran. We can conclude with confidence that Pakistan and Iran have minor irritants and can be managed with sound diplomacy and better relations.

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