

Iran-Pakistan Nexus: A Holistic Perspective on Historical Ties and Future Trajectories

Hussain Ali¹



¹ PhD Scholar, School of Public and International Affairs, Jilin University, Changchun, PR China.

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Correspondence addressed to Hussain Ali. ✉ alihussain22@mails.jlu.edu.cn

Abstract: This study explores the complex historical development of Pakistan-Iran ties, categorizing them into four separate periods from the Cold War to the present day. The alliance endured external obstacles, including sectarian terrorism and geopolitical changes like 9/11, which had a greater influence than internal issues. Nadeem, Hassan, and Zahm, prominent scholars, have thoroughly analyzed the Afghan element and its impact on bilateral relations. The paper examines the changing dynamics affected by Chinese participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly focusing on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This research is motivated by the lack of a thorough analysis of the impact of Indian and Chinese involvement in Iran-Pakistan relations, especially regarding economic interests. The methodology utilizes both primary and secondary sources, with a focus on the cultural connection of the Baloch people. The report also examines potential future developments in trade between the two countries and Afghanistan's security in relation to the Iranian nuclear deal. Geopolitical, historical, and cultural connections are recognized as elements that promote similarity rather than difference. The article ends by evaluating outstanding matters such as unexplored market opportunities, border conflicts, and the necessity for efficient financial mechanisms to enhance economic collaboration.

Key Words: Pakistan-Iran, CPEC, relations, Baloch

Introduction

There are four distinct periods in the history of relations: The Cold War period (1947 to 1970), Bhutto's Arab inclination period (1970 to 1979), the Diverting the Path period (1980 to 2002), during which Pakistan was an ally of the US in the Afghan war, and the Reviving Efforts and Hurdles period (from 2002 to present) are the four distinct periods in the history of relations.

During these historical periods, the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Iran had numerous bumps and turns, but the governments and public opinion were determined to maintain their alliance at any cost. Surprisingly, external factors such as sectarian terrorism or international politics. 9/11 has a greater impact on bilateral relations than internal factors such as political parties inside the country. Several significant alterations in Iranian policy were seen after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Following the American embassy incident in 1979, Iran and the United States severed their diplomatic relations. Iran was sanctioned by the United States and other Western countries. During this time period, Pakistan played a significant role in the American proxy fight against the Russians in Afghanistan. Although both countries supported the Afghan war, Pakistan and Iran had disagreements over the Taliban government's anti-Shia policies and the spread of terrorism in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan region.

A number of studies have been conducted on the Afghan and Taliban factors, as well as the consequences of this element on Pakistan-Iran ties, such as "Pakistan: Regional Rivalries Local Impact," which addressed Afghanistan as a factor in Iran-Pak relations in great detail. Nadeem and Hassan offered a thorough examination of the harm caused by sectarian activities in Pakistan and Iran throughout the 1990s on relations between the two countries. Zahm also spoke on the external factors that have influenced the

Iranian-Pakistani relationship. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the political climate in the South-West Asian area shifted dramatically. President George Bush of the United States of America scolded Iran and the Taliban administration, putting Pakistan in a difficult position since the country had elected to cooperate with the United States in its battle against terrorism. Nonetheless, Pakistan and Iran worked together to confront non-state entities that were exploring terrorism in both countries. After 2010, when China started to assert itself as a global economic force, the world order began to shift its attention away from domestic politics and toward international politics via economic activity. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is part of its foreign strategy, has wowed poorer countries as well. Chinese officials offered Pakistan the CPEC project, which rapidly drew the interest of Indian officials. India saw it as a Chinese invasion and meddling in South Asia. A great deal of literature has been written on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its advantages and disadvantages. Shortly after, India retaliated by offering Iran the opportunity to construct the port of Chabahar in order to meet the CPEC.

Although there is a wealth of literature on the challenges facing Pakistan as a result of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Chabahar port, a comprehensive study that examines the effects of Indian and Chinese involvement in Iran-Pak relations is lacking, particularly where economic interests are at stake. The current research will attempt to give an analysis of the aspects that are significant in strengthening ties between Pakistan and Iran.

Hypothesis

This study will examine the factors that could influence the relationship between Pakistan and Iran, both in a favorable and unfavorable manner.

What actions should Pakistan take to maximize the economic and political gains from its relationship with Iran? Understanding the historical context of these difficulties is essential for finding a solution.

Methodology

In accordance with the purpose of this research, both primary and secondary sources have been utilized in conjunction with one another. One of the most important aspects of the fundamental methodological framework of the research is the geo-cultural interaction that exists between the Baloch people of Iran and Pakistan. This relationship is investigated in great detail throughout the course of the study. The approaches of descriptive analysis and analytical analysis have been utilized in order to analyze the data. A few techniques or methodologies that are considered to be comparative have also been utilized in the research.

Relations in Perspective: Historical Ties and Future Prospects

With regard to two major areas: bilateral business and Afghanistan's security, this section analyses the future potential for effective border management within the framework of the Iranian nuclear agreement in the context of two essential areas: bilateral commerce and Afghanistan's security.

Occasionally, national policies in both countries, as well as internal policies within their respective power echelons, may differ and then converge again. Geopolitical, historical, and cultural data, on the other hand, implies that convergences and connections will take priority over divergences and antagonism in future bilateral interactions between Iran and Pakistan.

These two geographically related territories of South Asia and the Middle East were straddled for most of history by the Ottomans, the Mughals, and the Safavids. Iran provided Persian language and court culture

to pre-British Muslim rulers in India, most notably the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), which was akin to the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) in the west (Haneda, 1997).

In both empires, Turco-Persian culture was recognized as the dominant civilization. Turkish and Persian features were combined in an unusual way at the royal court of the Mughal emperor. It was common at the Mughal court for two parties to vie for control, and this was especially true in this era. There were two groups recognized as such: The Turani (Turkish-Central Asian) and the Irani (Persian).

While the former was mostly composed of soldiers, the latter was composed primarily of men of letters. The Mughal court did not distinguish between different professions. Thus, it was not uncommon for a poet to serve as the commander-in-chief of the Mughal army during a time of war. In Iran, on the other hand, the Safavids (1501-1736) differentiated between "men of the pen" and "men of the sword" (Burn & Haig, 1937). In replacing Persian as the official language with English, the British were able to mitigate the significant literary influence of Persian.

Aristocratic interest in the Persian language (both Hindu and Muslim) could only be stifled by restricting Persian study to official positions within the ruling class. Despite the fact that the finest poets of the Urdu language and Pakistani nationalism, Mirza Asadullah Ghalib (1797-1869) and Sir Muhammed Iqbal (1877-1938), believed their Persian poetry to be superior in content and quality to their Urdu compositions, this was not widely accepted by the general public. Its repercussions may still be felt today, although to a lesser amount, thanks to Iranian cultural centers throughout the country (a total of eight in number all over Pakistan). In a similar vein, British Council offices are used to preserve English dominance in other countries. The replacement of Persian by English, according to some, was only a case of one imperial language being supplanted by another and, as a result, of little significance. (Alam, 2004)

The underlying cultures of Persian and English, on the other hand, continue to be admired by educated Pakistanis despite the fact that Persian is considered to have a greater local flavor due to the country's close association with it. In addition to more intangible aspects such as language and culture, the economic potential of Iran and Pakistan's shared 564-mile border is the most tangible factor that demonstrates the two nations' continuous closeness. (Jaffrelot, 2004)

Working together in the region to ensure peace along their borders and inside their own administrations has been a tradition for Iran and Pakistan for a long time. Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan signed the Treaty of Saadabad in 1937. To put it another way, there was an understanding not to assault (Dann, 1988). Pakistan and Iran joined the US-led Baghdad Pact, which also comprised the United Kingdom, Iraq, and Turkey, following India's independence from the United Kingdom. (Alam, 2004)

The name of the organization was changed to the Central Treaty Organization in 1958 as a result of Iraq's membership withdrawal from the organization. This is CENTO. Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan were the three countries that initially established the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in July 1964. The RCD. 1985 was the year that saw the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Organization. This is an ECO. Afghanistan, five newly founded Central Asian republics, and one Caucasus country (Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan) were added to the roster of participants the next year. Kazakhstan was also included in this group. It is possible that enhancing the efficiency of the latter forum will contribute to the improvement of regional cooperation and economic progress. (Shah, 2014)

Iran-Pakistan Bilateral Trade Volume

Iran and Pakistan ought to work together as partners in the economic and security sectors, taking into consideration the geopolitical and historical circumstances that exist between them. In the years following the revolution that took place in 1979, the Iranian government has placed a significant emphasis on the infrastructure of transportation, border markets, and communications. According to a statement that was released not too long ago by an Iranian official, the following are five potential areas of potential partnership. According to The Iran Project (2017), some of the industries that were represented included the nuclear energy industry, railroads, transportation, steel, and petrochemicals. The quantity of business that takes place between Pakistan and Iran, which is still relatively low, is negatively impacted by issues with border security, which are a disadvantage for both countries. Sanctions imposed by the international economic community and the trafficking of illegal goods are two additional significant elements that contribute to the low volume of trade. The total value of the trade that took place between Iran and Pakistan in 2014 was 217 million dollars. (Shah, 2014)

As of the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the volume of trade between the two countries has remained at historically low levels (Rafique, 2016). This is despite the fact that it reached a height of 1.32 billion dollars during that time period. As a result of the worldwide economic sanctions that have been imposed on Iran as a consequence of its nuclear activities, there have been fewer commercial interactions between Pakistan and Iran, as stated by the government of Pakistan. Following the conclusion of the nuclear accord, there is a possibility that sanctions will be loosened. The efforts that both countries are making to increase their trade should be aided by this. In addition, the participation of Iran in the projects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has the potential to become a significant source of economic convergence, thereby including the Middle East and Western Asia in the CPEC. (Sheikh & Price 2012)

The absence of financial channels has long been a stumbling obstacle in the development of bilateral trade. A memorandum of understanding was signed in Tehran on April 14, 2017, between the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Bank Markazi Jomhouri Islami Iran is Iran's central bank (BMJII). The pact establishes a framework for resolving trade disputes and is intended to boost bilateral trade.

Despite the fact that there are no financial institutions, there is still a significant amount of bilateral trade that takes place. This trade is carried out through smuggling or with the assistance of neighboring countries. It would be beneficial for the two countries to build appropriate finance channels in order to facilitate the expansion of their bilateral commerce. It would be disastrous for Pakistan to ignore these ties in Iran until the country is able to reintegrate into the global economic and linguistic system. Pakistan has banking relations with a number of countries, and it would be detrimental to ignore these ties in Iran. Numerous propositions have been put forward that imply that there should be no trade embargo between India and Pakistan. These propositions have been made for the purpose of facilitating economic activity. For the purpose of fostering economic connectedness, the utilization of railroads and traditional modes of commerce is recommended. The Iran-Pakistan Economic Commission was established with the intention of fostering bilateral cooperation and bolstering the agreements that were already in place between the two nations. In 2004, Pakistan gave its approval to a "Preferential Trade Agreement" with Iran, which went into force soon after it was ratified. The two countries then communicated their wish to broaden the scope of the agreement that they had previously reached. They came to the conclusion that increasing the quantity of things that were available for purchase would be beneficial to the bilateral economic connections. By the year 2020, it is anticipated that the total value of commerce will have reached \$5 billion, and it is also anticipated that both nations will sign a free trade agreement concurrently.

Relations between Iran, Pakistan, and Convergence and Divergence

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan have signed a number of agreements, both on paper and in practice, aiming at deepening political and economic integration, including membership in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (ECO). The depth of the relationship, despite all of our efforts, remains lacking.

According to Alex Vatanka's statement, the cultural, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and historical ties that exist between these two neighboring nations are true and comprehensive. Several indicators, including strong economic ties and political agreement, may be used to assess the success of bilateral relations in general and bilateral relations between neighbors in particular. Although these are important considerations, they are not the only ones that may be used to determine if a relationship is successful or unsuccessful. Furthermore, it is vital that the irritants be dealt with in a calm manner. Unfortunately, most of these measures aren't up to standard in terms of effectiveness in countries like Pakistan and Iran. (Campbell & Dann, 1988)

Market Potential That Has Not Been Exploited

Only US\$ 1.26 billion in trade between Iran and Pakistan, a pittance when compared to the mutually agreed-upon objective of US\$5 billion in bilateral trade. M. Reza Nazeri, Iranian Consul General in Lahore, states that despite the fact that the two countries trade a total of \$6.25 billion in total bilateral trade, only US\$1.26 billion moves via established channels. ¹¹ There is yet to be a Free Trade Agreement signed between the two countries to replace the previous PTA signed in 2004. (FTA).

The Free Trade Deal (FTA) has been debated several times, but no agreement has been reached. The absence of established financial channels between the two countries has impeded trade between them. This has a negative impact on business and commerce. The absence of quick financial channels has a significant effect on the business community on both sides of the border. Despite the presence of a Joint Economic Commission, which has yearly meetings with the chambers of commerce on both sides, such significant roadblocks continue to persist.

Conflict along the Border

In many circles, the so-called "border of friendship" that divides the two countries is referred to as "Iran' and Pakistan's only friendly border." It's not clear how correct this notion is, although Balochistan in Pakistan and Sistan-Baluchestan in Iran, which share a border, have both experienced turmoil in the past, according to historical records. Baloch, who are Sunni Muslims, make up the vast majority of the Iranian population, and they are often dissatisfied with the Shi'ite-dominated government. (Imtiaz 2019)

Beyond the fact that they have strong cultural and linguistic links with their Pakistani neighbors, they are a marginalized minority that often disputes with the country's centralized administration over the distribution of resources. Pakistan's foreign ministry has reported an increase in Iranian shooting and shelling into Pakistani territory, despite the fact that Tehran has its own issues with Islamabad. Another six Pakistani soldiers were killed yesterday when a paramilitary convoy on patrol in the Kech region was ambushed and attacked by insurgents. Taking into consideration the above evaluation of Pakistan-Iran relations, it is necessary to study these ties against the backdrop of a moving global environment and identify the key points of convergence and divergence among them.

Conclusion and Future Prospective

This paper examines the historical development of Pakistan-Iran relations, highlighting the continuous diplomatic ties between the two states despite facing various hurdles during different periods. External elements, including sectarian terrorism, international politics, and the impact of 9/11, have been crucial in influencing the direction of this partnership from the Cold War to the present day. While internal dynamics and political parties within each country have had an impact, the overall theme has been a resolute commitment to sustain the alliance.

The study has highlighted the importance of external influences, specifically the Afghan factor, in impacting bilateral ties. Scholars like Nadeem, Hassan, and Zahm have produced significant works that have deepened our comprehension of the complex dynamics related to the Afghan war and its impact on Pakistan-Iran relations. The report emphasizes the changing environment due to China's emergence as a major global economic power and its influence on the area, particularly through projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

In the future, the research indicates various paths for additional investigation. A more thorough investigation is required to examine the impact of Indian and Chinese participation in Pakistan-Iran ties, especially concerning economic interests. It is important to closely examine the regional geopolitics, economic linkages, and the Belt and Road Initiative to comprehend their impact on the future of Pakistan-Iran relations.

Furthermore, it is necessary to further investigate the cultural and geopolitical intricacies of the Baloch people and how their interactions impact the overall context of Pakistan-Iran ties. This could offer useful insights into the complex connections that have historical origins and still influence the interactions between the two nations.

Unexplored market opportunities, border conflicts, and a lack of established financial systems are important challenges that require additional investigation. Future studies should concentrate on suggesting feasible methods to improve economic cooperation, tackle security issues, and encourage sustainable development along the common border.

Ultimately, this research establishes a basis for a more detailed comprehension of Pakistan-Iran ties. The future of this partnership will be shaped by current regional and global events as the geopolitical environment changes. This study sets the stage for future academic exploration of the various aspects of diplomacy commercial and cultural connections between Pakistan and Iran in the upcoming years.

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