

## **Impact of US on Iran and Pakistan Relations after withdrawal from Afghanistan**

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### **Abstract:**

*The relations between Pakistan and Iran have been complex mix of cooperation and peer rivalry. The U.S has made struggle on various angles to convince Iran as a strategic partner to influence the relationship with this state in future. The United States influencing the Iran as a rich policy member in future while the Pakistan is the neighbor of Iran strategically and economically and a good ally of the United States in War on Terrorism. The U.S. drawdown from Afghanistan may lead to greater instability and a vacuum in that country. The Islamic Republic of Iran, one the most powerful regional actors in Afghanistan, is poised to exercise substantial influence there after the U.S. drawdown. In addition, the drawdown may provide Iran with the opportunity to strengthen ties with other powers involved in Afghanistan, such as India and Russia and Pakistan. This attendant scenario will more likely create an atmosphere of uncertainty in the region. This paper will explore the foreign Policy of Pakistan's towards Iran and the United States, is one of the influencing factors in this regard.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan-Iran Relations; US policy –Pak Iran Relations; US Withdrawal Policy; US-Iran Relations; US-Pakistan Relations.

### **I. Historical Background**

Iran's relations with Pakistan can be characterized as a complex mix of cooperation and peer rivalry. In recent years, political ties between the two countries have improved over trade and energy issues; they also cooperate intermittently on border security. At the same time, tensions continue to exist over religious sectarian issues. As the two continue to compete for political influence in Afghanistan as a means of securing their respective security and economic interests, Pakistan's activities will be a key determinant of Iran's strategy. An increase in unrest brought about by a precipitous withdrawal of ISAF troops from Afghanistan would complicate relations.

In the near term, however, tensions will likely be tempered by Pakistan's reliance on Iran for energy. Tehran now sees New Delhi as a natural partner, it maintained much closer ties with Islamabad throughout most of the Cold War. Iran's last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was the first world leader to recognize Pakistan as an independent country in 1947, and he strengthened relations with the new state following the Indian government's decision to support Iran's Egyptian rival, Gamal Abdel Nasser (Harsh, 2009). Bilateral relations were further improved by the 1955 Baghdad Pact, which brought both Iran and Pakistan into the anti-Soviet bloc allied with the United States. Iran later interceded on Pakistan's behalf during the latter's conflicts with India in 1965 and 1971, providing diplomatic and financial support (Ansar, 2013).

Throughout the 1970s, the two countries' militaries and intelligence agencies also cooperated closely to counter the shared threat of Baluchi nationalism. Concerned over the potential effects on Iran's own Baluchi minority, the shah assisted in putting down a separatist insurgency in Pakistan's Baluchistan province (Vatanka, 2012). The 1979 Iranian Revolution greatly altered the nature of Iran-Pakistan relations, transforming the two countries into rivals rather than partners. While Pakistan remained neutral during the Iran-Iraq War, which threatened the Iran's existence, Ayatollah Khomeini's efforts to export the Iranian revolution fueled tensions in Pakistan.

Coinciding with the Pakistani leader Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's efforts to Islamize the country—an effort that Pakistan's Shia feared would strengthen Sunni extremists—and Saudi funding of Sunni fundamentalist schools, the period from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s has been described by the analyst Alex Vatanka as the “zenith of the Islamic Republic's championing of Shia militancy in Pakistan. In 1986, Khomeini issued a fatwa instructing the Iranian government to protect Pakistan's Shia, which led to the founding of Shia extremist groups such as Tehrik-e-Jafaria.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, anti-Shia groups such as the Sepah-e Sahaba began to sprout, targeting Shia doctors, businessmen, and intellectuals. The Iran-Pakistan rivalry intensified further following the 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. In the ensuing civil war, the Pakistani-backed Taliban fought the Iranian-supported Northern Alliance, with the former eventually gaining control over 90 percent of Afghanistan. Despite the Sunni-Shia violence inside Pakistan and the rivalry in Afghanistan, Islamabad and Tehran maintained ties during the late 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps surprisingly, this period of tension coincided with cooperation between Pakistan and Iran in the field of nuclear technology (Hassan, 2005). The two countries are believed to have signed a nuclear cooperation agreement in 1986, and several Iranian scientists received training in Pakistan in 1988 (Afrasiabi, 2006). Meanwhile, the A. Q. Khan network was supplying centrifuge technology for uranium enrichment to the Islamic Republic (Squassoni, 2004).

#### **A. Economic and Diplomatic Relations between Iran and Pakistan**

Ties between Iran and Pakistan have improved over the last decade—driven by political transformations in Tehran as well as economic factors—although tensions could increase over Afghanistan and sectarian issues as well as Iran's closer relations with India. Following his 1997 election, the reformist president Mohammad Khatami's diplomatic outreach helped pave the way for his December 2002 trip to Islamabad, which marked the first time an Iranian leader had visited Pakistan in a decade (Afrasiabi, 2012) Two years later, the two countries signed a preferential trade agreement, which led to a boost in economic ties (Malik, (2012) The trade balance has remained in Iran's favor,

with Pakistan importing \$572 million in goods in 2010-2011, mostly in the form of petroleum, chemical compounds, and machinery. During the same period, Iran imported \$162 million in Pakistani goods, mainly rice, fruit, and cotton.

Pakistan's energy shortage played role in drawing it closer to Iran, with parts of the country having relied on Iranian electricity since 2002. Key to fulfilling Pakistan's energy needs is the \$1.5 billion Iran-Pakistan pipeline, which is intended to transport natural gas from Iran's South Pars gas field to Pakistan's Baluchistan and Sindh provinces. According to the deal, the pipeline was expected to be operational by December 2014, with Pakistan anticipating annual royalties ranging anywhere from \$500 to 600 million. In any event, some Iranian and Pakistani analysts have remained skeptical throughout the project's lifetime. They believe that Islamabad's recent expressions of eagerness to pursue the deal were simply a political stunt by President Zardari and his supporters to gain popularity with an electorate angry over electricity shortages. Despite efforts by both countries to maintain strong economic ties, international sanctions on Iran have had a negative impact on bilateral trade, which dropped from \$1.3 billion in 2009 to \$735 million in 2011, largely as a result of U.S. efforts to prevent oil-related transactions with the Islamic Republic. Islamabad and Tehran have attempted to mitigate the impact with workarounds.

Although Pakistan relies on Iran for energy, the two countries could find themselves at odds in the future over their ports in Gwadar (Arabian Sea) and Chabahar (Gulf of Oman). Lying only approximately 100 miles (161 kilometers) apart, Pakistan's Gwadar and Iran's Chabahar are both set to be major transshipment hubs for products moving in and out of Central Asia. The extent to which the ports become a source of tension may depend on whether Pakistan deems Indian involvement in developing Chabahar, which India plans to use as a conduit for goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia, to be part of an effort to limit Islamabad's economic and military presence in the region. For Pakistan, Gwadar provides its navy with strategic depth because it is located farther away than the port of Karachi from India's naval bases in Gujrat and Mumbai (Escobar, 2012). Gwadar also provides an opportunity for Pakistan to increase its military ties with China: Beijing plans to use the port as a base for its navy, allowing it to bypass the Strait of Malacca and perhaps one day station its forces close to the strategic Strait of Hormuz. As of yet, however, Pakistan and Iran have not expressed concern over a potential rivalry stemming from activities at Gwadar and Chabahar. In fact, in addition to assisting in the construction of an oil refinery in Gwadar, Iran is developing the port's power grid (Bokhari, 2009). The two countries even have discussed connecting the ports. Border stability represents another avenue of cooperation between Iran and Pakistan. With the entirety of their more-than-800-kilometer-long shared border inhabited by Baluchis, Tehran and Islamabad are concerned over their respective Baluchi insurgencies as well as the drug trafficking that helps fund them. Since 2002, the Pakistani-Iranian Joint Ministerial Commission has been meeting to discuss these issues. On the Iranian side of the border, the Baluchi insurgency has taken on a jihadist, anti-Shia tone in response to the Islamic Republic's discrimination against Iran's Sunnis, of which Baluchis compose a large portion. In 2009, following a high-profile Jundallah bombing in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province that killed several senior members of the Revolutionary Guards, Iran closed its border crossing to Pakistan for several months (Tharoor, 2010). Then-President Ahmadinejad openly accused "certain officials in Pakistan" of supporting the insurgents on behalf of the United States (Bokhari, 2009).

Tensions eased as a result of the February 2010 capture of the Jundallah chief Abdolmalek Rigi, probably due to the assistance of Pakistani intelligence (Tharoor, 2010).

Afghanistan likely will remain the greatest source of competition between Iran and Pakistan. Despite close economic cooperation, mutual suspicion exists over developments there. According to Ahmed Rashid, “Whatever their official line might be, beneath the surface the intelligence agencies of both these countries are extreme rivals. This is a result of divergent interests, rendering “leverage within Afghan politics a zero-sum game. Islamabad worries, for instance, that a strong anti-Pakistani government in Kabul would begin asserting itself over the Durand Line issue, a border dispute between the two countries that remained dormant during Taliban rule. Iran, on the other hand, fears the return to rule of the Pakistani-backed Taliban.

Meanwhile, Iran and Pakistan both compete for the hearts and minds of Afghanistan’s educated class by offering study opportunities in their respective centers of learning.<sup>1</sup> In the end, however, Afghanistan is more central to Pakistan’s core national interests than it is to Iran’s.<sup>2</sup> Whereas Iran has direct access to Central Asian markets through its border with Turkmenistan, Pakistan’s most direct route goes through Afghanistan. Pakistan also sees Afghanistan as an essential means of maintaining “strategic depth” in its rivalry with India. Meanwhile, Iran will likely continue placing most of its focus on projecting power in the Middle East and the Arab world. As a result, according to a former senior Afghan official, Pakistan’s security role in Afghanistan is expected to increase relative to Iran following the ISAF withdrawal. According to data published in 2012 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Pakistan has taken in more refugees than any other country in the world, followed by Iran. A return to civil war in Afghanistan likely would exacerbate sectarian tensions in the region as well, with Iran backing its Shia allies and Pakistan backing Sunni militants (Khan, (2013). A sustained increase in sectarian attacks inside Pakistan also could affect ties between Tehran and Islamabad, although officials in both countries would probably attempt to downplay its impact. In recent years, Tehran has prioritized cordial ties with Islamabad over defending Pakistan’s besieged Shias. Vatanka maintains, “Those in charge of the Islamic Republic engage in a clear attempt to paint relations as healthy and to brush aside any factors that might complicate ties.” This comes at the cost of upsetting interest groups in both countries. In a 2012 Zogby poll of the Muslim world, 71 percent of Pakistani respondents reported holding an unfavorable attitude toward Iran, and only 26 percent thought relations should become closer (Zogby Research, 2012). Views differed markedly among Sunnis and Shias, however, signifying the great sectarian divide in the country. While only 10 percent of Pakistani Sunnis held a favorable view toward Iran, 94 percent of Shias did. In fact, 81 percent of Shias supported the Iranian government over the anti- Ahmadinejad Green Movement, while the same proportion of Sunnis identified with the protesters.

## **B. US Presence in Afghanistan**

On 11 September the Al-Qaeda and Taliban were settled in Afghanistan. There occurred disintegration between two groups. Osama Moved to Kandahar from Tora Bora

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<sup>1</sup>Influential Afghan, interview with the authors, February 23, 2013

<sup>2</sup>Afghan scholar, interview with the authors, February 19, 2013

in 1990, and adjusted himself a few miles away from Mullah Omar, and the Taliban's refusal to hand over bin Laden after September 11 indicated a viable relationship. The United States is against Al-Qaeda and its ally to use its homeland for terror threat. Nor the United States like the Afghan Govt. to support the Taliban in its homeland. As Al-Qaeda has strong relations with other militant group of Taliban, like Haqqani, and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan which is a big challenge for the U.S. national security. As the US Special forces and other conventional forces which are aided by the CIA against Taliban. On its military side, they have two goals to be achieved (1) to train Afghan Local force against Taliban, and (2) to target the Al-Qaeda and its Allies overseas. An Afghan-led counterinsurgency strategy would involve using U.S. forces to conduct several tasks:

1. Train, equip, and advise Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, and Afghan Local Police forces
2. Conduct direct action operations against high value terrorism targets
3. To provide intelligence, civil affairs and military information support operations.

As per policy of Obama Administration the number of NATO and U.S forces may be decreased from 8,000-12,000 depending ground condition. This strategy will leave some risk on the ground reality which include the Afghan National security forces and its allies will control the insurgency with assistance of U.S Forces.

After the withdrawal of U.S from Afghanistan most of the Taliban control part will be handed over to Pakistan for supporting the Afghan national force to defeat the Taliban and its ally in next decade. As the stakes in Afghanistan and Pakistan more strengthen than in Iraq, in part since it is the region where the leadership of Taliban and Al-Qaeda born which is still frightened on attacking the United States, continues to exist (Jones, 2013).

### **C. Iran Pakistan Relations after withdrawal of US from Afghanistan**

Both Pakistan and Iran are against of Chahbahr and Gawadar Port which are gateways to central Asia. Iranian Govt is worry about Gwadar may be used by the U.S for monitoring the Iran activities (Lason, 2005). Both countries pursued their own national interests in 1990s by looking for their benefit in Afghanistan 1990s, particularly after the emerging of Taliban in 1994 (Khawaja, 2004). The relations were disturbed when Taliban killed the Iranian diplomat at Hazara Shiites and occupied the Mazar Sharif in 1998. The other factors are united state relation with Pakistan, when the US Support the Israel in 2001, and the present of American military in Iran Afghanistan and Iraq. Iran felt itself the security threat from the United States.

There is some reason to identify here the Influence of the US on Iran relations with Pakistan (1) Nuclear Proliferation of Pakistan with Iran. (2) The Posture of Pakistan-Iran-India gas pipeline (3) the secret operation of Pakistan against Iran. Even as the Pakistan's supply of nuclear proliferation to Iran, there are many reasons that Pakistan wants cooperation with Iran in all aspect. The Pakistan interest is to providing nuclear technology to the neighboring country like Iran will adversely affect the security interests.

#### **D. Pakistan's Stance on the Iran–Pakistan–India Gas Pipeline**

United State has tried repeatedly to discourage Pakistan from the ongoing negotiation with the Iran–Pakistan–India (IPI) pipeline. Americans are worried that after signing this project it would not only deteriorate their efforts to cut off Iran economically and diplomatically, but it would also give an increase to the Iranian economy (Kronstadt, 2012). Pakistan has been warned that sanctions could be applied if it goes ahead with the proposed IPI pipeline. The American still believes that Pakistan would say yes on getting the financial aid in 2002 received from us (Siddharth, 2005). The Iran has sanctioned an act with Libya which is beneficial for Iran to invest per year \$20 million over Nuclear Technology. The American has the argument that the pipeline revenues getting by the state would further Iran's supposed nuclear weapons program. With the project apparently closer to reality, the U.S stepped up its diplomatic offensive. The US embassy Charge the affairs in Pakistan in April 2007, Peter Bodde a spoke person told the reporter that we will strongly oppose the pipeline but Pakistan will also focus on alternative energy like coal, wind and solar energy (Montero, 2007). Pakistan is taking much interest in the natural gas of Iran which will reduce the supply from other country as its own natural resources are insufficient to fulfill the demand of the country. As the Oil production is very less as compare to consumption the import ratio of its usage is 80%. As Pakistan has much natural resources of its own but the demand is high and production is less for future use (Howard, 2007). Both countries, in their meeting in October 2007, signed a project about the differences of the pricing of the gas. This meeting increased pressure on both countries from the United State. The US objected the Pipeline project with Pakistan and refused relation with Pakistan. But the decision of Pakistan will move forward and as a result the revenue will flow to Iran automatically, but the main mission of American to down the Iran Politically and Economically. Some evidence also occurred that The United State sought to destabilize the Iran during the war of Afghan in 1980. The vice President of America Mr. Bush offered train to some Mujahedeen in Pakistan Baluchistan to destabilize Iran In 1984. In early 1990s it was also suggested that the CIA station in Islamabad based was monitoring Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan. Mehtab Ali Shah a writer reported in 1997 (Shah, S. M. A. (1997). That United State is using the Pakistan soil in Balochistan against Iran in the Central Asia. In February 2007, the Iranian authorities executed Nasrullah Shanbe Zehi, an alleged member of the Jundullah, a Sunni militant group, which claimed responsibility for a car bombing, after he confessed that he had been trained in Pakistan and that the attacks were part of an American plan to destabilize Iran. A documentary was presented by the American in April 2007 on news channel ABC reported that Jundullah is encouraged, supported, and perhaps even financed by the United States to conduct terror raids inside Iran (Kumar, 2008). However, operation between Pakistan and the United States of the kind mentioned above raises certain questions to which there are no easy answers. Firstly, the extent to which the covert operations are being carried out with the full agreement of the Pakistani state. Secondly, the extent to which Pakistan is useful as a launching pad for US-supported dissidents, since the US presence is already there in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thirdly, the impact that the instability in Baluchistan and Sistan-Balochistan will have on the viability of the IPI pipeline to which the Pakistan government is attaching so much importance. Fourthly, the possibility that problems in Iran could lead to a backlash within Pakistani Baluchistan.

## II. Conclusion

The America has some personal interest in Pakistan for continuing security policy from time to time. Especially after the incident of 9/11The U.S has pressurized Pakistan to implement that policy which U.S wants. The United States succeeded in in controlling the Military facility of Pakistan through their military and intelligence agency. Without the Support of Pakistan the United States would failed on starting operation in late 2001 against anti-Taliban. However, Pakistan didn't show interest to go beyond the requirements of action against the Taliban regime, which was the target of worldwide antagonism and hatred after 9/11. The Pakistan military also calculated carefully the national interest which lead itself to the negative approach on the military operation at the north western Tribal areas against it Muslim Population. Important factors within Pakistan did not care for US stress on operation against Taliban and Al-Qaeda leader. By the same logic, the Pakistan government also condemns to accept the advice of US on the Iran Pakistan gas pipeline and the nuclear proliferation with Iran. There are also some secret on the soil of Pakistan for subversive activities of the United States against Iran. But this evidence are not more in numbers to warrant blame that Pakistan allowed the United states against Iran to destabilized. On the whole, one can come across that Pakistan is caring none of any outside pressure on framing a foreign policy; Pakistan is seeking a friendly relation with Iran for the resourceful and important neighbor. It is now clear that Pakistan would never get external pressure to be able withstanding with Iran in future.

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