

Pak-Iran Relations: New Dynamics and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

The relations between Pakistan and Iran have seen many prospects of convergence and divergence. Till 1970s era, the two countries exhibited enormously cordial relations. Iran, being the first country to recognize creation of Pakistan in 1947, has always supported Pakistan's stance on Kashmir issue. However after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1990s created a new and competitive scenario in their pattern of relationship. Hence a race for dominance in Afghanistan by both the countries deteriorated their friendly ties. Similarly after horrendous incident of 9/11 which completely changed the dynamics of global politics, brought the two countries to gather. But once again after the upcoming US withdrawal from Afghanistan, it seems that either of the two countries is bent to ensure hegemony in Afghanistan. However, some developments like Gas Pipeline, Pakistan's position on nuclear issue of Iran, have driven the two countries to the seemingly friendliness atmosphere.

KEYWORDS: Pakistan, Iran, SEATO, CENTO, RCD, War on Terror, Afghanistan, Nuclear Issue, Security Dimension, Economic Aspect.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since its inception, professedly the first and foremost aim of Pakistan's foreign policy had been to work for the unity of Muslim Ummah on one hand and to foster peaceful and cordial relations with the rest of the world on the other. By keeping in mind this core objective of its foreign policy, the policy makers of Pakistan have been actively looking forward to strengthen its bilateral relations with all of the Islamic states. After independence this psychological support assumed the shape of political support and Pakistan helped many Muslim countries to get independence from their colonial masters.(Bhutto, 1965)

In this back drop, the relations between Iran and Pakistan were established soon after the independence of Pakistan. Iran was the first Muslim country that recognized Pakistan as a sovereign country and extended its diplomatic support to Pakistan on the issues of prime importance for Pakistan. In this regard, Iran openly supported Pakistan's position on the issue of Kashmir and advocated the Kashmiris' right of self-determination. Pakistan and Iran are not only close to each other geographically but are also linked together through strong historical, Socio-Economic, ethnic and cultural ties that date back to centuries. Pakistan and Iran also formed part of a common trading area in the past.(Bhutto, 1965)

Pakistan after independence in 1947 established formal relations with Iran. These relations may be divided into four periods: the first which lasted from 1947 to 1954; the second from 1955, when both Pakistan and Iran became co-members of the Baghdad Pact later Central Treaty Organization (CENTO); the third period which began in 1964 when Pakistan and Iran joined Turkey to form a socio-economic and cultural organization called the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD); and the fourth and present period is the post 9/11 era. (Snyder, 1997)

Iran had not only recognized Pakistan immediately but it was the first ever state whose political head came on the official visit to Pakistan. In the year of 1950, Shah of Iran came to Pakistan to engage Pakistan diplomatically to enhance the bilateral cooperation on the economic as well as political relations. In this regard Pakistan and Iran had signed a treaty of friendship that laid the foundations of friendly bilateral relations in the longer run. Due to this initial good gesture shown by the two countries, the Pak-Iran border is referred to as a "border of peace and friendship". In spite of the differences of religious ideologies as Pakistan being the Sunni majority and Iran being the Shia majority, the Islamic identity is the major factor that has shaped their relationship. In this regard Iran had openly supported Pakistan in its war against India and even sent economic aid in the form of oil to Pakistan. On the other hand Pakistan supported Iran in its war against Iraq.(Mohiuddin, 2007)

The current Turmoil in Afghanistan brought these mutual suspicions to the fore front where the two countries supported opposing camps, the Taliban and Northern alliance. Emergence of the Jundullah militant grouping championing the cause of the Baluchistan Sunni majority in bordering Pakistan, aggravated the situation with Iran maintaining the group operates with the acquiescence of Pak security agencies, if not their outright support. The two countries however realizing mutual security interests have now evolved a trilateral

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mechanism with Afghanistan, to coordinate common interest, in the eventuality of withdrawal of NATO forces from the country. (Hussain K. , 2005)

Pakistan has always been concerned about Iran's relations with India and Iran has always been apprehensive about the US involvement and influence in Pakistan. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline would add large economic content to the relations, heralding socioeconomic betterment, taking care of the irritants that bedevil their relationship. Peaceful resolution of Iranian nuclear stalemate with the West is however of essence, for in case of armed conflict it will become very difficult for Pakistan to contain the situation with Iran, in its belief that the US would use its bases in Pakistan against its interests. (Cohen, 2011)

Historical Analysis

Iran was the first amongst the Islamic countries that accepted Pakistan as a sovereign state and made diplomatic relations with Pakistan. Iran had also openly supported Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir as well as on the other political issues of strategic importance for Pakistan. Pakistan and Iran are not only close to each other geographically but are also linked together through strong historical, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious ties that date back centuries. All these factors contributed to the drawing of Pakistan and Iran closer to each other. In addition to these, another factor which influenced Pakistan's decision to move an attempt to cultivate friendship with Iran was its tense relations with its other immediate neighbours, India and Afghanistan. (A.K Rai Hammed, 1998)

Pakistan-Iran Relations (1947-1970)

Pakistan-Iran relations have had steady undertone of cooperation and cordiality at local, regional and global levels through the years. During the early 1950s and 60s both countries were facing serious security and economic challenges and to overcome these challenges both states aligned themselves with US. During that phase of Cold War, US was actively looking to make the allies all over the world against the Communist bloc led by Soviet Union. However, Pakistan and Iran's policy of joining US bloc did not help them in coping with their challenges and both turned to mutual cooperation with each other at the regional level after disenchantment with their common ally. In the seventies the security needs have dismembered Pakistan (Kaleji, 2012)

The similarities in the Pakistan and Iran's heritage of that consists of the whole spectrum of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious values which dates back to centuries. The influence of Iranian civilization in India is due to the Muslims rulers that had their roots from Persia. For a very long time the Persian, along with Arabic, was the court language of the Mughals during their seven-century rule over the subcontinent. (Bhutto, 1965)

Pakistan's geographic location has bound its destiny historically with that of northern tier countries. Strategy and geopolitics at regional and global levels, concerning the region have made Iran and Pakistan constant partners and had drawn Iran and Pakistan into the vortex of superpower rivalry. Both Pakistan and Iran were the main allies of US in the Middle East region. Both countries sought the assistance of western powers to safeguard their security interests. In this regard both states were the member of the Baghdad pact signed in 1955, later known as CENTO. (Rizvi, 2004) Both sought to follow a normalization policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the mid-sixties as disillusionment with the West set in. Iran and Pakistan's relations with the West became tenuous towards the end of the decade. Domestic upheavals resulted in change of governments in both countries. (Rizvi, 2004)

The Islamic ideology was the driving force behind the movement of Pakistan and this identity kept playing a significant role in the foreign policy architect of Pakistan. (Alam, 2004) Therefore, in the years following independence, Pakistan turned to the Islamic countries, especially the Islamic countries of the Persian Gulf and Arab for cooperation, alliance and support. Iran backed Pakistan's membership of the UN and its stance on the Kashmir issue, in response Pakistan extended its diplomatic support to Iran when Iran decided to nationalize British oil companies in the year 1951 as per its new economic policy. (Hassan, 2004)

On a number of occasions Iran's mediation helped ease out tense relations of Pakistan with other countries. Pakistan found in Iran a steadfast friend in intra-regional disputes. In 1963 Iran's mediation helped restore diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan over its support for Pakhtunistan after a break of two years. In 1965, Pakistan once again reposed its trust in Iran when it chose an Iranian diplomat, as its nominee on the tribunal appointed to arbitrate the *Rann of Kutch* dispute between Pakistan and India. (Alam, 2004)

During the Indo-Pak war in 1965, Iran extended not only its diplomatic support to Pakistan but also sent significant economic aid. An Iranian government statement labelled the Indian attack on Pakistan as aggression. While Iran could not respond positively to Pakistan's request for aircrafts due to the constraints of its arms policy vis-à-vis the United States, it did provide Pakistan with jet fuel and gasoline. Iran's diplomatic support was particularly valuable in offsetting the feeling of isolation in Pakistan a feeling that was the direct result of the neutralist attitude of its ally, the United States of America. (Hassan, 2004)

Baghdad Pact (1955)

In the 1950s during the tense Cold War years, Iran's physical proximity to the Soviet Union increased its security vulnerabilities. Thus the threat of communism, the memories of the occupation of Azerbaijan as well as the knowledge of the American role in bringing this occupation to an end, decided the Iranian choice vis-à-vis the Baghdad pact. Pakistan on the other hand, with a hostile India and not too amiable Afghanistan as neighbours was also pre occupied with a quest for security. Pakistan carefully cultivated the friendship of the United States and joined the Western alliance system in the hope of securing arms for its defence needs. The United States on its part was receptive as it had itself embarked on a search for allies for its policy of containment of communism.(Rizvi, 2004)

Following the Iraqi revolution in 1958, the Baghdad pact was renamed CENTO. Both Iran and Pakistan became the members of this pact on the basis of their own bilateral strategic relations with US. Iran preferred to build strong relations with US at the time and signed this pact neglecting Soviet Union offer to sign fifty years non-aggression pact. Pakistan and Iran along with other Muslims members of the Baghdad pact unanimously condemned Israeli aggression against Egypt during the Suez crisis in 1956. Again, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Pakistan and Iran supported the Arabs in and outside the United Nations.(Ahmed, 1997)

Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD)

The revolution in Iraq in 1958 and U-2 incident during the 1960 pushed Iran and Pakistan to bring major shifts in their foreign policies. Pakistan absorbed the shock more quickly and began developing his ties with the China. The dangers of partisanship in foreign relations became apparent to Iran as well. Consequently it was announced in 1962 that Iran would not allow the stationing of American nuclear missiles on Iranian soil. Therefore, in order to cope with the emerging regional security challenges, both Iran and Pakistan revisited their traditional foreign policy making. Sustaining this mood, Pakistan sought to normalize its relations with Afghanistan. However, a more benign and less bold organization was set up by Pakistan and Iran together with Turkey in 1964.(Ali C. M., 1998.)

The major reason for creating RCD were that CENTO could not satisfy the member states regarding their security needs as its scope was limited to the conflicts involved only Soviet Union. Pakistan was not satisfied over CENTO role to solve Kashmir issue, Turkey was dissatisfied over the Cyprus issue and Iran was concerned over Iraq war. The RCD partners were also aware of a relaxation of tension between the US and the USSR, reducing the value of military pacts. The revolutionary government of Iran was inclined to dissolve the RCD altogether because it was an instrument of 'superpower influence in the region and a by- product of CENTO. Pakistan, on the other hand, resorted to active diplomacy to save the RCD and persuaded Iran to review its RCD policy as RCD and CENTO were separate from each other. The seventies thus ended with the ambiguous role of the RCD, which remained in existence from 1964 to 1979.(Alam, 2004)

Pakistan-Iran Relations (1971-1979)

Iran was mostly tied down to internal consolidation, domestic reforms, and suppression of internal uprisings. Fear of Soviet expansionism and Arab radicalism kept the regime of the Shah fully occupied. All these factors robbed Iran of a dynamic role on the regional or global levels. In contrast Pakistan, the largest Muslim nation with a growing industrial base and an enviable military establishment since 1959, was more dynamic. Mid-sixties and seventies began the period that saw resurgence of Iran in world affairs.(Kraudzun., 2012)

Post 1971 war, Iran needed Pakistan as the focus of its South Asian policy. But the relationship was to be an unequal one. Iran helped Pakistan with all its problems. It helped in the normalization of Pakistan's relations with its neighbours and it provided Pakistan with military, economic, and diplomatic support at a crucial time. From the Iranian perspective, an unstable and weak Pakistan would pose serious threats to the stability of its South Eastern regions.(Ahmad, 2015)

There were also other factors involved in Iran's concern regarding Pakistani territorial integrity, these being Iran and Arab countries relations and the question of the safety of sea-lanes. Pakistan also played a very crucial role to normalize Iran's relations with other Middle Eastern countries. Similarly, the importance of the coast of Mekran was not lost on Iran, as in unfriendly possession it could create serious disruption in the Iranian oil flow to 85 per cent of the non-communist world. (A.K Rai Hammed, 1998)

Pakistan tried to make up for its military vulnerability by developing a diplomatic option; strengthening and cementing relations with powerful neighbouring Iran, which could be depended upon in any future conflict with India. Iran's interest in Pakistan as an indispensable buffer state between itself and India its prospective regional rival was fully realized by Pakistan. In addition both Pakistan and Iran got the status of an observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).(Ahmad, 2015)

Pakistan-Iran Ties (1979-1990)

The end to the rule of Shah of Iran in January 1979 and the coming of the Islamic Revolution under Khomeini's leadership brought about a transformation in Iran's external as well as internal policies. Moreover, it was also the first country to recognize the revolutionary Iranian Government which renamed the country as the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moreover, the Islamic revolutionaries in Iran were influenced, among others, by the Pakistani poet-philosopher Sir Iqbal who had written some of the most stirring poetry, in the early twentieth century, both in Urdu and in Persian, on Islamic renaissance and the concept of Islamic brotherhood. All of this pointed towards a common ideological affinity with Pakistan. (Sumita, 2008) The Iranian media played the negative role and remained hostile towards Pakistan. (Cohen, 2011)

The Iranian revolutionaries, who regarded the US as the 'great Stan', were also inclined to view Pakistan as a pro-American country which, along with the ousted Shah's government, had been members of Western military pacts. Some observers believe that in order to counter the Iranian interest in the Pakistan Shias, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries started to extend support to Pakistani Sunni militants thereby playing a part in the rise of Pakistan's ominous sectarian problem and the resultant internal destabilization, notably since the early 1980s. (Sumita, 2008)

A new era in Pakistan-Iran relations was ushered in on 14 January 1986, when the President of Iran, Ali Khamenei paid his first visit to Pakistan since Iranian revolution in 1978. He was very enthusiastically greeted in Pakistan, especially by the Shias. Zia openly denounced Iraq for initiating a war with Iran and sided with Iran on this issue. During Khamenei's visit, Zia clearly said in an interview with the Iranian news Agency that "Iraq attacked Iran and occupied its territory. Iran took back its lands after forcing the invading troops to withdraw". After Khamenei's visit many efforts were made by both sides to accelerate the two-way understanding and cooperation. (Hassan, 2004)

Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan-Iran Relations (1990-2001)

The decade of 1990s saw some strains in Pakistan-Iran relations. During early days three factors may be considered responsible for the exemplary relations between two states; (1) Co-membership of CENTO which enhance their cooperation's in certain fields (2) agreement between Pakistan and Iran regarding their boundary settlement. (3) Iran's efforts for reconciliation between Afghanistan and Pakistan after break up in their diplomatic relations. Since the end of the cold war, a sort of distrust has entered the relations between the two countries and Taliban were the main cause of this lack of trust. (Amin, 2000) The bilateral relations of Pakistan and Iran saw serious strains during the early 1990s due to the rise of anti Shia terrorist organizations and the killing of Iran's Counsel General Sadiq Ganji. He was killed by the anti Shia forces in 1990 in Lahore. The emergence of Taliban's government in Kabul further aggravated the situation. (Khalid D. I., 2013)

The bilateral relations of Iran and Pakistan remained cold during the period of 1990s. The policy difference regarding Afghanistan issue and sectarian violence were the major factors for the Pak-Iran cold relations. Unfortunately both countries failed to address the issue of divergence diplomatically. The tense relations between Iran and Pakistan not only seriously jeopardized the regional security but also it bitterly affected their political interests in the region. (Amin, 2000)

The Pakistani society has witnessed increasing high intensity of sectarian violence in the last several decades and it has seriously undermined the prospects of good relations between Pakistan and Iran. Tehran is very critical regarding Pakistan's support to the Sunni Taliban's and had been expressing its anger over this support from time to time. The tension was very high during the year of 1998 when Taliban executed Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan. Iran had even threatened to launch direct military attack against Pakistan supported Taliban's. Since then, there has not been any significant attempt made by any of the state to build trust and relations by and large are moving at slower pace. Though there exist a great scope for the better relationship between these two Muslim neighbouring states but it just requires a committed and visionary leadership at both sides. (Rizvi, 2004)

New Dynamics and Prospects

Pakistan-Iran relations have varied in their nature and intensity depending on the regional and global factors. The relations between both countries are shaped by several convergences and divergences of interests. The convergences facilitated their relations while the divergence of interests remained a major hindrance to the anticipated rise in these relations. It is noteworthy that, Pakistan relations with Iran do not involve any territorial dispute, unlike its other neighbouring states of India and Afghanistan.

Security Issues

The security issue is considering to the old and new dimension of every due to the changing scenario of regional and International Politics. Recent years have also seen Iran and Pakistan making some effort towards security cooperation. The Pakistan-Iran joint ministerial Commission on Security was set up in 2001 to increase

cooperation and to provide assistance to each other on the critical security issues. This cooperation would cover not only terrorism issues but also the drug trafficking and religious terrorism as well. Regular interactions between the two sides have become the norm at various levels from top political to intelligence services. This growing interaction on security issues has been deemed important by both sides in light of the rapidly evolving geopolitical environment in the region.(Butt, 2012)

There exist a huge potential for cooperation in the field of defence industry between both states. The cooperation in this field would be cost-effective outcome for both states in the longer run. The dependence on the West regarding their defence requirements could undermine their security. Pakistan has well developed defence industry of producing small arms and light weapons and Iran could serious benefits from this industry.

Economic Dimension

After security economic development is the second most important objective of every state foreign policy. Like the security it is the missing point between the two states that has been ignored by both the states throughout the history. Iran's being the oil rich country has always attracted Pakistan to increase its economic trade with Iran. Pakistan looks Iran as a source of cheap energy corridor. However, some of the analysts are of the view that the scope of Pak-Iran relations has been limited to the energy trade and both parties have been failed to build a strong relationship in the economic sector. A number of factors in recent years, however, have given a boost to Pakistan-Iran economic ties. The economic growth in Pakistan in the last few years has enabled Pakistan to look for regional partners, while the Iranian regime has initiated some economic reforms, faced as it was with a complete collapse of its domestic economic health.(Khalid I. , 2013)

Though Pakistan's trade with Iran consists of US \$ 0.5 billion, it is a significant improvement over the previous declining trend. The aim of the two sides is to take their bilateral trade to the \$ 1 billion mark at the earliest opportunity. Bilateral trade excluding the account of oil has shown from \$ 300 million in 2006 to \$ 800 million in 2009. The two countries have signed a preferential trade agreement in 2004, with the hope of converting it into a free trade agreement.(Butt, 2012)

Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline

The IPI project had its genesis in a proposal made in 1989 by Abbas Maleki, head of the Tehran-based International Institute for Caspian Studies. The 'Asian Gas Pipeline,' as it was then called, would be consist of pipeline construction to supply gas from Bandar Abbas in Iran to Calcutta via Pakistan. It was planned that 36 billion cubic meters gas would be supplied per year to Pakistan and India. It was estimated at the time that 10 percent of this gas would be consumed in the Iranian Provinces, 20 percent in Pakistan, and the balance in India.(Nd, 2010.)

According to Abbas Maleki, India's first preference was the deep sea option in order to bypass Pakistani territory. Alternatively, India said that it would prefer a pipeline route going offshore from Iran and along the shallow sea route to India. However, he said that the first option would face major technical difficulties such as laying and maintaining a pipeline 3,000 meters under the sea on the mountainous seabed, which would lead to additional costs and technical risks. The second (shallow offshore) option too, he said, had its own problems. If the pipeline were to pass through the shallow territorial waters of Pakistan, the security concerns of India would not be eliminated. (Malik's, 2001)

Iran has already completed laying of pipeline on its side, but because of US pressure Pakistan is finding it difficult to finance the multi-billion dollar project. But brushing aside US pressure the Zardar government has signed agreement with Iran for financing the gas pipeline in Pakistan in February 2013. For the energy starved Pakistan, supply of gas and electricity from Iran is crucial for its economy but the American administration has been insisting that Pakistan should concentrate on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) gas pipeline project. Afghanistan is not expected to stabilize in the medium term, which means there can be no safe passage for the gas pipeline through it. (Hashmi, 2010)

Afghanistan Factor

Iran and Pakistan has different set of interests in Afghanistan. Both wanted a stable and peaceful neighbour Afghanistan but with entirely divert strategies. Iran supported the Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan to pursue its interests in Afghanistan. On the other hand Pakistan was compelled to involve in the internal affairs of Afghanistan during the Cold War and post Cold War and for that purpose it supported the Pashtoon forces to achieve its interests. (Ali L. A., 1998)Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan's stability is interlinked and all these states are interdependent regarding their economic, security and strategic interests. In the 1970s one objective of Iran's South Asian foreign policy was reduction of the growing Soviet influence in the region. To achieve this objective, Teheran initiated an active diplomatic strategy to engage Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to normalize their bilateral relations as well as to adopt a unified approach to address the regional issues. During the Afganistan crisis, there was significant difference of their policy in Afghanistan as per their own assumed regional objectives. (Alam, 2004)

The Afghan issue has huge significance for the regional security and regional cooperation in the economic sector. The two countries have improved relations since their interests converged with the fall of the Taliban, both countries have shown willingness to develop consensus to address the issue of Afghanistan along with other regional security issues. Pakistan is looking forward to enhance bilateral relationship with Afghanistan, with the signing of the Joint Declaration on directions of bilateral cooperation, in January 2009. A fresh Transit Trade Agreement with Afghanistan is being negotiated, along with substantive trans-regional development agenda. (Khan, 2008)

Sectarian Issue

Sectarian violence in Pakistan is another major factor that has crucial role in shaping the Pak-Iran relations. This issue over the times has severely affected the relations undermining the economic cooperation with each other. Iran is Shia majority country and its leaders have huge following in Pakistan by the people from Shia sect. Iran also considers its responsibility to ensure the safety of Shia sect Muslims throughout the world. Some of the analysts are of the view that Iran exploits the leverage of Shia to advance its own agenda in the other states. On the other hand, Pakistani governments are unable to effectively handle the sectarian issue and over the times Pakistani society has been witnessing increase in the conflicts provoked by the sectarian reasons. (Ali L. A., 1998)

However, the primary responsibility to solve the issue of sectarianism lies on the government of Pakistan. Unfortunately, the inability and lack of vision of the political leadership have caused the complexity of the issue with the passage of time. The precarious internal security caused by sectarian clashes has provided an opportunity to India to exploit the situation as per its own regional objectives. The good relations between Iran and Pakistan does not serve the Indian interests and India has ensured that the relations remain cold by adding fuel to the fire in the form of instigating sectarian violence as per its capacity to do so. To deal with the issue of sectarianism, Pakistan would require a pragmatic approach that would not only ensure handling the issue domestically but it should also involve strategy to refrain Iran and Saudi Arab to stop supporting those groups that are involved in the sectarian clashes. It is very obvious that sectarian violence is not only threat to national integrity and cohesion but also it affects its bilateral relations with other countries. (Ahmad, 2015)

Nuclear Issue

Iran launched its nuclear program in 1950s with US support, which continued till the revolution. Post-1979 Iran suspended the program temporarily reviving it later. In 2002, a secret uranium-enrichment facility was discovered at Nantaz fanning international concerns. The secret activities surrounding Iran's nuclear program revealed by the Iranian opposition group advocates their concerns. Therefore they have demanded that Iran should suspend its nuclear activities immediately. The Nantaz incident heightened the West's and the US suspicions, of Iranian intentions and demand suspension of the program till its resolution. Consequently, UNSC raised sanctions, freezing assets connected to Iran's nuclear program, besides the unilateral sanctions by the US and the EU. (Sumita, 2008)

Iran was desperate to gain access to nuclear technology. Despite their deep differences, Pakistan and Iran expressed their willingness to cooperate on nuclear domain for civilian purposes in the relatively tension-free 1989-95 period. Both wanted to get benefit from the transfer of technology permitted by the NPT. The murky world of nuclear proliferation did not care for identities. Iran and Pakistan saw their individual interests come together on the question of nuclear technology. "Pakistan was willing to sell the technology to a country whose intentions it did not trust. And Iran purchased the technology from someone it did not really regard as a friend". The Pakistan-Iran nuclear cooperation saga underscores, that mutual interest of states can sideline every other issue of contention. (A.K Rai Hammed, 1998)

The IAEA discovered traces of highly enriched uranium on some of centrifuges and suspected Pakistan's alleged role of helping Iran developing the bomb. The findings of IAEA inspectors also included the documents prepared by Dr A.Q Khan explaining the details of nuclear centrifuges. Pakistan is alleged to have sold, directly or indirectly, the centrifuges to Iran. However, Pakistan has firmly denied its role in this proliferation but admits that in personal capacity A.Q Khan has provided the crucial information to the Iranians. Later on, Dr. A.Q Khan admitted his role in this proliferation and apologized to the Pakistani nation for its role. Although Pakistan officially denies any involvement, few, would accept the veracity of the government's claims. (Sumita Kumar, 2008)

On the other hand, Iran has always supported Pakistan on its nuclear program development. Iran believes that nuclear weapons hold key role for Pakistan's security keeping in mind its security challenges emanating from nuclear armed India. Iran also greeted Pakistan in 1998 when Pakistan had tested its nuclear weapons technology. (Zaman, 2009)

Conclusion

Good relations between states are based on the commonality of interests, but Pak-Iran interaction has always been dominated by the third factor (Country) and some domestic factors. Both the states exhibited ideal

relations at the time of Pakistan's creation, but due to security issues Pakistan joined the Western block while Iran was practicing the exploitation period from the US. Iran always voiced for Pakistan regarding its deepest issue of Kashmir and supported in the war of 1965 against its traditional rival India. Internally, being a Muslim states both have divert interpretation for the Islamic laws, which always considered one of the hurdles between the two states relation due to religious identity.

The war in Afghanistan in 1979 broke the bridge between the two states when the Soviets pulled out from Afghanistan, Pakistan supported the tribal Pushtoon forces to achieve its objectives while Iran was struggling for the Northern alliance to dominate the Afghan society. Iranian revolution of 1979 put an end to the US imperialism in Iran while Pakistan clubbed its self with the Americans fighting the International Jihād against the Red Army in Afghanistan. Post Soviets Afghanistan became a battle field for both the states. Both the states made alliance for fighting a proxy war in Afghanistan, for that purpose Pakistan got the support of Saudi Arabia, Iran's big rival while Iran developed its relations with India, Pakistan enemy.

Post 9/11 Pak-Iran relations seemed to improve due to the changes in international politics and regional politics. The Afghanistan factor was no more existing to isolate both the states from strengthening their relations. Due to new dynamics including Pak-Iran economic relations and Iran nuclear issue and Pakistan energy crises set the stage for both the states to improve their relations and provide the best standard of living to their people.

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