

Iran-Pakistan Relations: Challenges, Constraints and Opportunities

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Effective border management between Iran and Pakistan is an area in bilateral relations where tactical coordination could eventually result in strategic convergence. This is due to the affiliated commonalities between the two nations in terms of culture and commerce. Common cultural and shared economic interests would be instrumental in the effort toward rebuilding strategic relations. The benefits of strategic cooperation could emerge in the form of enhancement in bilateral trade, and increased stability in Afghanistan. This paper explores how the nuclear agreement between Iran and P5+1 has prepared the grounds for improvement in bilateral cooperation. It is recommended here that effective border management would be the relevant CBM to establish post-nuclear deal tactical coordination. This could result in the revival of strategic ties between Iran and Pakistan based on economic integration and defense cooperation.

Keywords: border management, bilateralism, trade, energy, security

The removal of economic sanctions, in consequence of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 (US, France, China, Russia, UK and Germany), termed as the joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA) signed on July 14, 2015, would reduce the restraint on Iranian economic involvement in South Asia and the Middle East.

This paper explores how the nuclear agreement between Iran and P5+1 could become the building block for improvement in Iran-Pakistan bilateral ties. It is recommended that effective border management would be the most relevant CBM to establish tactical coordination. This could further result in the revival of strategic convergence between Pakistan and Iran based on economic integration and defense cooperation (Alam, 2004). The foreign policy of enhanced ties towards Iran is in line with Pakistan's traditional posture of bilateralism (Burke & Ziring, 1990).

Iran's renewed economic activities in the South Asian and the Middle Eastern regions would be reminiscent of the pre-1979 era. However, during the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Iran was not only the regional *gendarme* due to the American alliance, but it also enjoyed close security relations with Pakistan. Iran provided support to Pakistan in its 1965 and 1971 wars with India. Iran was also involved in quelling the Baloch insurgency against the state of Pakistan in the 1970s in the Iran-Pakistan border areas.

The Middle East plays the role of a major transmitter of cultural influence into South Asia and Pakistan due to the religio-cultural factor. Pakistan's historical relations with Iran relate to the high culture based upon Persian language. Iran was the first state to recognize Pakistan in 1947, and Pakistan was the first to recognize the new Iranian government in 1979 after the Islamic revolution. These ties cooled off when Iran was under international economic sanctions owing to the controversy

surrounding Iranian nuclear program. There is a recent factor of divergent security perceptions on both sides. In Iran, it is the threat perception caused by Pak-Saudi relations. In Pakistan, there is a concern that India-Iran ties could lead to “strategic encirclement” of Pakistan (Ezdi, 2015).

The economic opportunities offered by the Iran nuclear agreement create conducive environment for both states to move away from mutual suspicions and progress toward bilateral convergence. Bilateral economic interactions would reduce the likelihood of conflict in inter-state relations. In light of the above, border security assumes importance. It is an area that impacts upon trade amongst the three states of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as facilitating overall security within Afghanistan.

Problem Statement

The Iran-Pakistan relations did not entirely break off in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution in 1979. Yet significant matters of mutual interest were put on hold in bilateral ties during the last two decades because of international economic sanctions on Iran. This includes collaboration in high technology surveillance of the border, exchange of notes on Gwadar and Chahbahar seaports, and progress on the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline (Panda, 2015). In case of complete removal of sanctions, there is catching up to do in various sectors, but would it be done? In other words, would bilateral ties undergo resurgence? In this paper’s view, the following two factors would be important in the context of resurgence of ties. The first factor is the significance of the JCPOA for Iran-Pakistan relations.

The JCPOA is important for Iran-Pakistan relations in general, even though the JCPOA should be considered a necessary albeit insufficient condition for substantial improvement in ties. The second factor pertains to the significance of confidence building measures (CBMs). The most important CBM required for improving ties in the backdrop of the JCPOA could be in the form of effective border management, especially in view of the recurrent border tensions and the resultant economic costs.

The two states could revive strategic cooperation via improvement in an area of significant mutual interest in both economic and security domains i.e. effective border management. Pakistan and Iran are neighbours who share a long and porous border. There is no dispute over border delimitation. The role of border management has increasingly come into focus in the last few years caused by illegal cross-border movement. This impacts upon bilateral trade. During the Shah’s era in the 1970s, both countries forged strategic cooperation. However, the bilateral ties were adversely affected subsequent to the Iranian revolution in 1979. The imposition of international economic sanctions on Iran in the 1980s further restricted bilateral economic interaction. In the aftermath of the JCPOA, Iran and Pakistan are favorably poised to avail this economic opportunity.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review:

Pakistan and Iran are located in contiguous yet separate regions i.e., South Asia and the Middle East, respectively. Therefore, the two states are not involved in a regional security complex (Buzan & Weaver, 2003). This effectively means that these states do not face any reason and compulsion to compete against each other in the security sector despite being neighbors. This situation can be contrasted against India-Pakistan relations where a security complex clearly exists.

The significance of bilateral ties between Iran and Pakistan go beyond merely extending the courtesy of good neighborly gestures. According to Alam (2004), these relations are dictated by geopolitical logic to ensure national security. Iran has always pledged support in the past whenever Pakistan's relations worsened with archrival India. Similarly, Pakistan did not join efforts to challenge Iranian interests even during the peak days of Iran-Iraq War, and despite the influence of Saudi Arabia and the U.S. (Jan, 1993). According to Mazari (2000), the reason is simple and supported by the logic of survival. Iran did not want removal of the Pakistani buffer to find itself neck-to-neck with India, South Asia's regional power. Pakistan considered the land beyond its western borders, which includes both Afghanistan and Iran, as its strategic depth vis a vis India (Daily The News, May 10, 2017).

During the 1970s, Pakistan adopted the foreign policy posture of bilateralism. This was meant to balance its relations with both the Eastern and Western camps in the midst of the Cold War politics (Burke & Ziring, 1990). Pakistan's well-established policy of bilateralism provides the contemporary framework for improving ties with Iran irrespective of its relations with other countries.

However, even states on friendly terms with each other are aware that competition cannot be subtracted from the international system. The principle of realism espouses self-interest. The security calculus of any state prioritizes perceived threats to territorial integrity, population, and government viz. the three attributes of a nation-state. This security-centric perspective is the preferred approach in realism because it places the state at the center of global politics.

This study recognizes security dilemma as a determinant of state behaviour within the realist framework. It is therefore posited that border management is an effective mechanism to deal with persisting security dilemmas. The security of any state is a dynamic affair. There are many components of state security. The issue of border security is among the most significant components of a state's security dilemma. It relates to the territorial permanence of a state, which is a primary component of sovereignty.

The geographical limits of a state would only be secure if its physical boundaries were safe (Andreas, 2003). In the age of globalization, contemporary international trends have increased state insecurity in terms of borders. There is international perception of the world as a global village. Similarly, there are increasing efforts leading toward economic and cultural globalization, and information revolution.

In these conditions, the state is drawing both closer to and away from other states. While the ideational borders with other states are becoming insignificant, the states are getting increasingly concerned with solidifying their physical borders to augment their stability and statehood. In the case of Iran and Pakistan, increased cross-border movement has given rise to problems of illegal travel, smuggling, and drugs and arms trafficking. Furthermore, this becomes more acute in a region that has to deal with the threat of extremism and terrorism. Last but not the least, the problem of border security becomes serious for weak states (Adamson, 2006). Their weak state structures often have to deal with fissiparous tendencies internally and hegemonic designs externally. The existence of soft borders like Iran and Pakistan is a natural corollary of these conditions.

This study merges two separate, albeit interrelated issues; Iran's nuclear deal and its impact on nonproliferation and regional security in the Middle East; and Iran's relations with Pakistan, which

draws the South Asian region into the sphere of study. While the regional area of interest includes both South Asia and the Middle East, the main issue that is instrumental in merging these two regions is violent extremism. A successful effort to deal with violent extremism through effective border management could improve long-term regional security. The success of the Iranian nuclear agreement could serve as a contributing factor toward joint regional efforts aimed at countering violent extremism.

This work has drawn from Alex Vatanka's book on Iran-Pakistan relations published in 2015 entitled *Iran and Pakistan: Security, Diplomacy and American Influence*. Some important insights on the evolution of Muslim religious thought in South Asia and influences from the Middle East, as well as the reasons behind the sharpening of theological divide and rise of sectarian intolerance, were derived for the intellectual enrichment of this paper from Khalid Ahmed's book *Sectarian War: Pakistan's Sunni-Shia Violence and its Links to the Middle East* published in 2011.

The following paper is divided in two main parts. The first part takes a bird's eye view of the Iran-Pakistan border. It delves into the peculiar features of the Goldsmith Line, and the major contemporary issues in border management. This includes the cross-border illegal activities, smuggling and human trafficking. The second part looks at the history of cultural ties and the future prospects of effective border management, with particular emphasis on bilateral trade, and security and stability of Afghanistan. The study concludes with the observation that renewed strategic cooperation between Iran and Pakistan has become feasible, although not inevitable, in the backdrop of the JCPOA. Therefore, it is the recommendation of this work that joint border security, bilateral trade and other sectors of mutual interest should be improved by both countries, in order for the re-establishment of tactical coordination, in the lead up to the revival of strategic cooperation.

Goldsmith Line: A Soft Border

The border adjoining the two states is termed as "Goldsmith Line" and is 564 miles long. It starts from the Koh-i-Malik Siah tri-junction of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan and runs up till the coast of Gawadar on the Arabian Sea. The Goldsmith Line is the meeting point between two important regions of Asia. It links Middle East with South Asia. The demographic composition of the Iran-Pakistan border region is based upon being part of the Balochistan province on the Pakistani side and the Sistan-Balochistan province on the Iranian side of the border. The Baloch community is straddled along both sides of border. There are ethnic Baloch in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan.

Border management is an area where security and economic domains intersect. The border is a source of connectivity and economic integration as well as possible venue for security competition. The past involvement of both Iran and Pakistan in intermittent security tension that adversely affected regional and border security was caused by the following three factors i.e.,

- (i) Regional alliances,
- (ii) Relations with the U.S., and
- (iii) The sectarian factor

Going forward, both Iran and Pakistan should be cautious about border security, because the border is where the inter-state games of war and peace are played out, and therefore efforts directed towards effective border management would help deal with the persistent security dilemmas.

The bilateral relations between Iran and Pakistan have experienced variants ranging from strategic cooperation in the 1970s, to disagreements over divergences in foreign alliances in 1980s and 1990s. In the backdrop of a significant development for Iran i.e. JCPOA - the national interests of Iran and Pakistan currently intersect in securing their common border, and striving to achieve shared economic prosperity.

Certain issues e.g. border security, energy cooperation, and strategic ties, existed between Iran and Pakistan prior to the signing of the Iranian nuclear agreement. These issues would be impacted by the JCPOA and would thus determine the future course of bilateral relations. It should be realized by both states that the bilateral relations ought to be determined by geopolitical imperatives of strategic partnership, and not the illogic of sectarianism. Consequently, an important CBM in this context would be to jointly secure the common border areas.

Main Features of the Goldsmith Line

There is no outstanding territorial dispute related to this border. The 'Border Accord' between Iran and Pakistan was signed on 31st August 1960 (Pattanayak, 2011). The accord was considered a landmark event in bilateral relations. The location of the border is not a source of conflict. The security situation in the border regions is the issue i.e. cross border movement. The illegal movement of people and the smuggling of goods are the two main causes of concern. The drugs and narcotics smuggling is an Iranian focus. The latest factor to add to the border friction is the wave of extremism and emergence of separatist movements, which has made the border a source of tension between the two countries.

The Iran-Pakistan border is vulnerable to illegal activities, which sometimes result in misunderstanding between the two states. There have occurred some border skirmishes involving the security forces of Iran and militants operating from Pakistani side of the border. On 21st May 2016, the leader of the Afghan Taliban movement, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, was killed in U.S. drone strike in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region reportedly while entering Pakistan from Iran (BBC News, 2016). In another incident, on 3rd March 2016 Pakistan arrested an Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav from Pakistani Balochistan, on charges of spying for India's intelligence agency the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) while being based at Chahbahar in Iran (The Hindu, 2017).

In the light of cross-border incidents noted above, the efforts toward improving border security between Iran and Pakistan could be the most effective CBM to broaden the scope of bilateral ties. The efforts to build bridges between the two states are dampened by the incidents of extremist attacks across the Iran-Pakistan border. Of Pakistan's four borders, the border with Iran is a reliably peaceful one. However, it is long, porous, difficult to monitor effectively, and impossible to close off completely. The areas adjacent to the border on both sides are prone to conflict due to ongoing ethnic or sectarian insurgencies. On the Iranian side, this is one of Iran's eight external borders with other states. It is among the comparatively peaceful ones considering other borders include Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

The Goldsmith Line is a porous border that makes provision of security an arduous task. The difficulties of managing this border are considerable. Ground patrolling and aerial surveillance both require substantial infrastructure. Both states lack the highly technological surveillance systems required for securing the border. Pakistan and Iran signed a border security management agreement in Tehran on February 9, 2013, that provides a framework to deal with issues like drug trafficking,

human smuggling, illegal immigration, jointly fight against terrorism, improved security cooperation on the border, and collaboration in the effort against kidnapping and human trafficking (Iran Parliament report, 2017).

The two sides also agreed to improve border markets and fast track extradition of prisoners. Earlier on, after an unclaimed bombing on February 7, 2007, in provincial capital Zahedan, which killed 13 people, including nine IRGC officials, Iran started building the Taftan-Mand boundary wall. It is a concrete boundary wall, stretching 434 miles from Taftan to Mand. This wall is part of the larger project, which includes building trenches, deep ditches, barbed wire fencing, and watchtowers (Lewis, 2011). Pakistan has defended Iran's right to fortify its border. Both sides have agreed to share intelligence to counter terrorist movements and increase surveillance (Express Tribune, Apr 7, 2014). There is also a hotline between frontier corps in Pakistan and the border security guards in Iran. There is a suggestion that similar hotline should be established between the directors general of military operations.

Cross-border Illegal Activities

The issue of border security between Iran and Pakistan has emerged as an important concern due to cross-border illegal activities during the past few years. Differences have cropped up over border security, and both Iran and Pakistan have openly expressed their frustration on different occasions. The border area is remote, rugged, and sparsely populated. Incidents of violence in both Pakistani and Iranian Balochistan have increased over the years and there is a danger that the ethnic Baloch on both sides of the Iran-Pakistan border could join forces (Rehman, 2014).

On the Pakistani side, the border is patrolled by the Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force. The border security guards backed up by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) man the Iranian side. The problem of movement of drugs and militants has exacerbated over the years. The fact that both Pakistan and Iran expressed their frustration at the highest levels shows that either the border is a lawless zone, or there is lack of trust, which would be worse in terms of security implications. The serious aspect, however, is that the Iranians allege that the border issues with Pakistan are, in fact, being instigated at the behest of Saudi Arabia because of the Saudi-Iranian ongoing balance of power competition in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle Eastern region. Similar feelings have been expressed in Pakistan with reference to Iran and India.

The issue of border security came to the forefront when an attack took place against IRGC officials in Sistan and the former Iranian president Mahmud Ahmed ineqad accused certain officials in Pakistan for the incident (Bokhari, 2009). According to the Iranian president, these terrorist groups received financial aid and safe havens in Pakistani territory. Moreover, he opined that the Pakistani government was displaying reluctance in taking strong initiative against such groups. These Iranian statements were backed up by Iranian 'hot pursuit' incidents inside Pakistani territory, which violated Pakistani borders.

The extremist group active in Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran was Jundallah (Soldiers of God). The leader of Jundallah, Abdul Malik Rigi, was reportedly apprehended and handed over by Pakistan and hanged by Iran in June 2010. Another group named Jaish-i-Adl (Army of Justice) emerged in 2013. It ambushed Iranian border guards killing 14 in October 2013 and claimed a local official prosecutor's assassination in November 2013. The high point occurred on February 8, 2014, when five Iranian border guards were kidnapped and allegedly carried to the Pakistani side of the

border by Jaish-i-Adl militants. Iran reported the matter and sought Pakistan's help, but Pakistan denied knowledge of the incident. This provoked the Iranian interior minister to threaten military action in order to create a 'security zone' in the border region (Reuters, Feb 18, 2014).

Smuggling and Human Trafficking

The focus on cross-border militant activities means that the mundane border violations are de-emphasized. The everyday problems related to border security stem from smuggling and trafficking, which is a common concern for countries with shared borders. The trafficking across the Iran-Pakistan border raises security concerns besides reducing the options for growth in economic ties.

The underlying reason for smuggling and human trafficking can be characterized as being the same as elsewhere in the region and globally. The gap between supply and demand within societies compels its citizens to access external suppliers to fill this gap. These illegal methods are adopted to avoid legal taxes and tariffs. The operative reason behind smuggling is the slackness of the government in channelizing bilateral exchange and transfer through a valid process. The governments are duty-bound to check those who are involved in illegal trading. The Iran-Pakistan border also forms South Asia's boundary with the Middle East. There are some individuals who attempt to illegally move over to Europe in search of employment. This makes trafficking a noticeable problem similar to smuggling.

The problem of dealing with mundane border security issues like smuggling of goods and even human trafficking might be manageable with latest technology. Both Iran and Pakistan are middle powers with medium military capabilities and sufficient regional clout to gain access to equipment from technologically advanced nations, if so desired. But it is relatively difficult to provide assurances against socio-economic evils and non-state violent groups. In an era of globalization huge quantities of goods are moving around the world. It would be harder to ensure border management to prevent illegal activities, particularly of a border as susceptible as the Goldsmith Line.

Nonetheless, these illegal activities in the border region cast a shadow over bilateral relations. Therefore, in order to facilitate cooperation and peace an agreement was signed between the two countries in 2004 declaring Sistan and Baluchistan as 'twin provinces' (Daily Dawn, Nov 24, 2004). Under this agreement, Iran would help the Pakistani Baluchistan government in advanced agricultural technology. It included greater interaction between educational institutes of the two countries. There was to be an exchange of teachers and students between the two provinces. The signatories were to ensure that visitors received maximum facilities and security on both sides. The penultimate objective behind efforts towards effective border management between Iran and Pakistan must include enhancement of bilateral trade, and overall improvement in the security situation in Afghanistan.

Relations in Perspective: Historical Ties and Future Prospects

This part looks into the future prospects of effective border management in the backdrop of the Iranian nuclear agreement in two significant areas i.e. bilateral trade and the security of Afghanistan. The national policies of the two states and within their respective power echelons sometimes tend to oscillate between convergences and divergences. However the evidence from geography, history and culture demonstrates that in future the convergences and linkages would be prioritized over divergences and rivalries in bilateral relations between Iran and Pakistan.

During the Middle Ages three huge Muslim empires straddled these two geographically contiguous regions of South Asia and the Middle East: Ottomans, Mughals, and Safavids. The pre-British Muslim rulers in India particularly the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), not unlike the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) in the west, received the Persian language and court culture from Iran (Haneda, 1997). The dominant culture in both empires subsequently came to be known as the Turco-Persian culture.

The Mughal court was an interesting amalgam of Turkish and Persian influences. There were two factions in the Mughal court, which often vied for influence. These were known as the *Turani* (Turkish-Central Asian) and the *Irani* (Persian) factions. While the former were predominantly soldiers, the latter were mostly men of letters. The Mughal court did not make any professional distinctions. This meant that it was not uncommon to find a poet leading a Mughal army in battle as the general-in-command. The Safavids (1501-1736) in Iran, however, separated “men of the pen” from “men of the sword” (Burn & Haig, 1937).

The strong Persian literary influence was curtailed by the British through the substitution of English as the official language instead of Persian. It was only by restricting the path of Persian learning to government jobs that the aristocracy’s (both Hindu & Muslim) infatuation with Persian language could be reduced. Nonetheless, the foremost poets of Urdu language and Pakistani nationalism, Mirza Asadullah Ghalib (1797-1869) and Sir Muhammed Iqbal (1877-1938), considered their Persian poetry to be superior in content and quality to their oeuvres in Urdu, Pakistan’s national language.

In the contemporary era this influence survives to a much lesser degree through the Iranian cultural centers in Pakistan (total eight in number all over Pakistan). This is much the same way as the English influence continues through the British Council offices. There might be some who would consider that the replacement of Persian by English was just one imperial language being substituted by another and therefore ultimately inconsequential. However, there is persisting admiration for both Persian and English and their underlying cultures among educated Pakistanis, although Persian is considered rather indigenous in nature due to its close-to-home origins. Beyond these intangible factors such as language and culture, the most tangible feature that indicates the continuation of closeness between Iran and Pakistan is the economic potential of the shared 564 miles long border.

The regional collaboration between Iran and Pakistan in pursuit of stability along the borders and within states has considerable history. In 1937, the Treaty of Saadabad was signed between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. It was a non-aggression pact (Dann, 1988). Following India’s independence from Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran joined the US-led Baghdad Pact, which also included Britain, Iraq and Turkey. After Iraq withdrew in 1958, it was rechristened as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). In July 1964, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan founded the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD). It was renamed Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1985. It later increased to include Afghanistan, five of the newly formed Central Asian countries, and one Caucasus country (Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan). The latter forum needs to be strengthened for increased regional coordination and economic development.

Iran-Pakistan Bilateral Trade Volume

According to the geopolitical and the historical factors, it is quite apparent that Iran and Pakistan should act as cooperative partners in both the economic as well as the security domains. The traditional emphasis of the post-revolutionary Iranian government has been on communications,

border markets, and transport (IRNA, 2017). A recent statement by an Iranian official spelled out five areas of potential collaboration. These included, energy, railway, transport, steel, and petrochemicals (The Iran Project, 2017).

The issues in regard to border security negatively impact the trade volume between Pakistan and Iran, which remains low. Two other important factors responsible for the low trade volume include, smuggling and the international economic sanctions. During 2014 the Iran-Pakistan trade was 217 million dollars. The volume of trade between both states has remained consistently low since 2008-2009, when it had experienced a boost and crossed 1.32 billion dollars (Rafique, 2016).

The official Pakistani reason for less economic interactions is the multilateral economic sanctions on Iran due to its nuclear activities. In the aftermath of the nuclear agreement the sanctions might be softened. This should help both states to increase their trade. Furthermore, any possible Iranian participation in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects could become a major source of economic convergence and include the Middle Eastern and West Asian region into CPEC (Daily Dawn, Jan 27, 2017).

A long-standing drawback in bilateral trade was the absence of banking channels. This was rectified on 14th April 2017 when the State bank of Pakistan (SBP) signed an agreement with the central bank of Iran, Bank Markazi Jomhouri Islami Iran (BMJII) in Tehran. The agreement provides a trade settlement mechanism and is expected to help boost trade between the two countries (Daily Dawn, Apr 14, 2017). The bilateral trade occurs regularly but in the absence of banking channels, it was done either through smuggling or through the help of third countries. The institution of proper banking channels would enhance mutual trade between both states. Pakistan operates banking channels in many countries and neglecting these in Iran was counterproductive once Iran is returning to economic and financial mainstream (Pakistan Point, 2016).

There are some proposals for facilitation of trade according to which, there should not be any embargo on Iran-Pakistan trade. The economic interaction should be facilitated through trains, and in indigenous mode of exchange. The Iran-Pakistan Economic Commission was formed to bolster mutual exchanges and enhance existing agreements. Pakistan endorsed "Preferential Trade Agreement" vis a vis Iran in 2004. Subsequently both states expressed the desire to expand the agreement. They resolved to increase the merchandise for the development of bilateral trade relations. According to Zahra-Malik (2016), the trade turnover would be increased to 5 billion dollars and both countries plan to sign a free trade agreement.

Implications for Stability in Afghanistan

Stability in Afghanistan is a significant factor of common interest. It is a critical state in the region located at the geographical junction of Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. If the security situation in Afghanistan worsens, it is bound to increase threat perceptions in South Asia and beyond. The collaboration between Iran and Pakistan along their shared border and in Afghanistan can improve Pakistan's diplomatic position inside Afghanistan, and thereby enhance security with reference to the Pak-Afghan border i.e. the Durand Line.

The U.S. has been following a general policy of military drawdown in Afghanistan despite the occasional troop surges. In the absence of a strengthened Afghan National Army during the U.S. drawdown, this country could become a hub of violent extremism. In order to prevent such a scenario, both Iran and Pakistan would find themselves burdened with enhanced roles for the

stability of Afghanistan. They would have to avoid a replay of the events following Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 (Cornell, 2003).

During the Afghan Civil War in the 1990s subsequent to the Soviet pullout, both Iran and Pakistan backed the two opposing sides. This led to another decade of internecine fighting followed by the rise of the Taliban. Neither Afghanistan nor the region can afford a repeat of that episode. Currently, the state of Afghanistan remains a potential source of instability for the region including Iran and Pakistan. Therefore, these two states would have to work out a workable formula for peace and security of Afghanistan in concert with other interested regional actors along with evolving U.S. policies within Afghanistan itself.

Conclusion

This paper contends that the JCPOA has prepared the grounds for improvement in bilateral economic and strategic ties. It is recommended that effective border management would be the most relevant CBM to establish tactical coordination. This could further result in the revival of strategic cooperation between Iran and Pakistan based upon economic integration and defense cooperation.

The renewed strategic cooperation between Iran and Pakistan has become feasible in the backdrop of Iranian nuclear agreement. Iran and Pakistan are both security-deficient states. There is a security-relevant context to the Iran-Pakistan bilateral relations predicated upon principles of realism. The immediate concerns related to Afghanistan and border security could be ameliorated through a revitalized diplomatic rapport between the two countries. This would also open avenues for substantial uplift in economic relations.

The major issue that states encounter vis a vis immediate neighbors is of border management. Of all the problems in Iran-Pakistan ties, those relating to the border management issues are the most threatening to bilateral relations. While Pakistan and Iran wish to maintain friendly terms, the fact is that both countries remain wary of interference from the other side, which puts the interests and nationals of either side in danger.

There are two important sectors where bilateral relations could attain strategic cooperation. These are areas of possible convergence between major stakeholders and policy makers in Iran and Pakistan. The first is the security sector, which involves improved border management. The second is the economic sector. The strengthening of economic ties and cooperation in the security sector would mutually reinforce one another. The current trade volume remains much below the desired level. The U.S. economic sanctions have also remained a factor in the past, but in the aftermath of the Iran nuclear agreement, there is much that the two states can do to improve the volume of bilateral trade. Furthermore, there is the area of energy security. China, Pakistan and India are three energy-starved states, which can benefit from natural gas pipeline networks originating from Iran.

The future energy needs of these consumer states signify that preferences in pipeline routes might not serve their needs since they would eventually require transmission through all potential routes. Therefore despite the presence of other potential energy producers in the Middle East, Iran's role as a significant energy provider would remain unchanged. A similar case can be made for developing seaports on the Arabian Sea (Khan, 2013). Both states possess prime real estate on the coastline. There are concerns raised in hawkish quarters on both sides that the simultaneous development of seaports is a zero-sum game. However, in reality both the seaports, Gwadar and Chahbahar, can supplement each other and increase overall profits for both sides.

Last but not the least, the case of Afghanistan brings together many negative and positive attributes of Iran-Pakistan bilateral ties. In a way the security competition in Afghanistan is an extension of the border management since Afghanistan lies at the northern end of the Iran-Pakistan border. The issues related to border security also pertain to Afghanistan. It is the country where violent extremism germinated in its current form. It is where the Iranian-Saudi Arabian rivalry found fertile battleground. It is also a potential route for gas pipelines and an access point to Central Asia. Pakistan can play a bridging role between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Afghanistan, and between China, India and Iran for energy security. Hence the future of Iran-Pakistan bilateral ties could be improved through policies directed towards border security and economic integration.

In the aftermath of the Iranian nuclear agreement, Iran would be able to exert its socio-political and economic influence in a less restrained manner than before. Iran should utilize this window of opportunity to deal with outstanding regional problems in concert with neighboring states. The efficiency and effectiveness in border management would create an enabling environment for Pakistan and Iran to pursue further improvement in economic and security ties between them.

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