

Pakistan-Iran Relation: Escalation to Normalization (2024)

Dr. Unsa Jamshed

In-Charge, Department of Humanities, GCWUF

Email: dr.unsajamshaed@gcwuf.edu.pk

Faiza Rafi

Lecturer, Pakistan Studies department, Lahore college for women University, Lahore

Email: faiza.wayne@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pakistan has good terms with Iran since its inception although periodically both states show reservation over the cross border terrorism. In-mid January Iran has violated the territorial integrity of Pakistan and Pakistan retaliated in response after two days of attack. There were chances of escalation of war between the two states because both states also graded down their diplomatic relations. But soon the government of both states realized that war is not in the favour of the people of both states that were already suffering from political and economic challenges. Both states expedite the process of normalization by using diplomatic channel. This paper is an attempt to explore the answer of following research questions:

Research Statement

- What was the justification of Iran on the violation of territorial integrity of Pakistan?
- How attack by Iran was perceived in different segments of Pakistan?
- What was the reaction of Pakistani forces on Iran strike?
- What are the challenges and consequences of escalation for both states?
- What was the international response on the Iran's action of breach of territorial integrity of Pakistan?
- How both states moved towards the normalization of relations?

Methodology

This is qualitative study and data collected from primary and secondary sources was critically analyzed. Primary data collected in the form of statement issued from Foreign office of Pakistan, Iran, China, and Turkey and State Department were used in the paper. The speeches of various political entities were also used to analyze the data. Secondary data in the form of research journals, books, and newspapers was also collected for analysis.

Key Words: Escalation, Violation, Terrorists, Integrity, Normalization

Introduction:

Iran lies on the south-west of Pakistan and shares almost 900km long border. Iran was the first state that accepted the existence of Pakistan and hosted its embassy. Both states foster diplomatic relations in the early days of inception of Pakistan (Chaudhry, 2024). Iran once the vital part of the Persian Empire has a cultural and religious impact on Pakistan. Pakistan is possessing the second largest Shia population after Iran and linguistically both states are more close to each other as the Urdu language has its origin in Persian language and Pakistani national anthem is also in Persian.

Pakistan and Iran always supported each other on various international issues. Iran always stands with Pakistan on the most sensitive issue of Kashmir. Pakistan also faced allegation and sanction on the sale of blue prints of nuclear weapons to Iran although it was again and again denied by the authorities of Pakistan. Pakistan played the role of mediator between Saudi Arabia and Iran when both states are hostile towards each other especially over the issue of Houthi rebels of Yemen backed by the Iran. Since last four decades Saudi Arabia and Iran have indulge in proxy-war on the soil of Pakistan that is a big source of sectarianism in Pakistan.

Although both states have religious and cultural associations with each other, there are still few irritants between the two states. Both states always communicated their reservations in peaceful manners without hampering the dignity of others. One of the major irritants is the presence of terrorist's hideouts or non-state actors along the border areas of both states and their involvement in cross border terrorism. Terrorism is the biggest irritant between the two states. Both states have lost security staff and civilians in cross border terrorism. Smuggling, and drug trafficking are other issues of concerns of two states.

There are few non-state actors and terrorist groups that tried to hamper the cordial relations between the two states. One such group was Jundallah, renamed as Jaish al-Adle after the execution of its leader by Iranian authorities in 2010. Jundallah was a Sunni militant organization and supporting the Sunni Muslim along the border while the sanctuaries of Baluchistan Liberation Front (BLF) and Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) involved in the separatists and terrorists activities in the largest province of Pakistan and operating from Iran. Although both states always assured their commitment to take action against such groups and would not allow their territories to be used against the other. In 2023 when General Asim Munir visited Iran, the counter-terrorism activities were on the top of his agenda while meeting with Iranian President, Foreign Minister and Generals.

But due to the activities of terrorists, Iran violated the territorial integrity of Pakistan in the mid-January 2024 and tension arose between the two states.

Escalation January 2014:

The current wave of tension between the two states arose when Iran targeted the camps of anti-Iran insurgent groups in Baluchistan, on January 16, 2024. This attack was a violation of the territorial integrity of Pakistan. Iran Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed that they had targeted hideout of Jaish-Adl (Army of Justice) through missile and drone attack in Sab Koh (Panjgur) town of Baluchistan, Pakistan. Jaish al-Adle is designated as terrorist group by Iran as well as by Washington. Iranian State run news agency *Nour News* claimed that the head-quarter of the Jaish al-Adl was destroyed by Iran in this attack (Paul, 2024). After attack Iranian Foreign Ministry claimed that the target was terrorists not the citizens of Pakistan. The justification of attack on Pakistani territory was given by Iran as the attack was a retaliation by Iranian forces on Jaish al-Adl attack on Police station in Rask in December 2023. Rask is a town in Sistan Balochistan of Iran. They claimed that these terrorists belong to Jaish al-Adl and had crossed the boundaries of Pakistan and attacked the Police station. According to Iranian sources almost 11 police officers lost their lives in this deadly attack. After the attack Iranian Foreign Ministry expressed its reservations and conveyed it to Pakistan and caretaker foreign minister of Pakistan assured its cooperation to eliminate the challenge of terrorism for regional peace and security during his telephonic conversation with his Iranian counterpart. But no action was taken afterwards by Pakistan and the current retaliation was in response of Rask attack because Tehran could not compromise on its national security and they also kept the integrity of brotherly and neighbourly state of Pakistan (Dawn, Jan 18, 2024).

According to Pakistani news the attack had taken the life of two innocent children and wounded three girls and not a signal terrorist was killed as claimed by Iranian Foreign Ministry. Commissioner *Makran* division confirmed the attack and said due to Iranian attack the mud house of Mr. Dad got damage along with an adjacent mosque. Two of Mr. Dad children aged 11 years and 6 months died while his wife and three daughters were injured. The wounded ones were shifted to *Panjgur* district hospital for treatment. Another senior government official from *Makran* division confirmed that not only missile but also mortar shells were fired from Iran and exploded at different places. After these attacks the security along the border was tighten up and more Frontier Corps were deployed along the border and a high alert was also issued (Dawn, Jan 18, 2024).

This attack was a surprise for Pakistan as the relations between the two states were normal and there were minimum skirmishes on border (Asfandyar, 2024). This happened for first time that Iran had violated the territorial integrity of Pakistan. The airspace violation by Iran was highly condemned by the Foreign Ministry of Pakistan. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, Foreign Office Spokesperson described the act of Iran as ‘illegal’ and ‘blatant breach’ of sovereignty of Pakistan. She expressed that there weren’t any justification of such violation and it was against the charter of United Nations. She also warned Iran to get ready to face consequences of its unilateral action (Dawn, Jan 18, 2024). Foreign Ministry in its statement said “this violation of Pakistan’s sovereignty is completely unacceptable and can have serious consequences (Dawn, Jan 17, 2024).” Ministry of Foreign Affairs not only lodged protest but also called Iranian *d’affaire* and conveyed strong reservation and condemnation of Pakistan on this strident violation. Pakistan graded down its diplomatic relations with Iran by calling its ambassador back and banned the entry of Iranian ambassador to Pakistan, who was visiting Iran. Pakistan also blocked Iranian diplomatist to returning back to Iran. All upcoming and on-going meetings were suspended immediately. Even the *Chabahar* Free Zone Business Exhibition was postponed on the direction of federal government and meeting of Pak-Iran Joint Border Trade Committee was called off in midway. Although delegates from both sides were expected to discuss issues to expand trade cooperation and sign number of memorandum in this regard.

The attack by Iran was a surprise for Pakistani masses and political entities that extend great respect for Iran. Mr. Shehbaz Shairf, the former Prime Minister, called the attack by Iran as an act to undermine the historical relations between the two states. He stressed the need of dialogue for the cooperation between the two states. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the former Foreign Minister of Pakistan reacted on Iranian attack and said “it would be a mistake to think that Pakistan cannot respond to violation. Pakistan has both the will and ability to respond.” Baluchistan interim Chief Minister also denounced the attack and announced the compensation for the families of deceased and for the wounded. Jam Achakzai, Information Minister of Baluchistan condemned the attack and described it as international crime to take the lives of innocents (Dawn 18 January 2024). Sherry Rehman, ex-federal minister said this action of Iran was highly condemn-able and challenge the unity of Muslims that were already facing trouble in Gaza. She said there was a need to understand that the non-state actors were playing their role to destabilize the border between the two states and any escalation leading to fulfill their motive. Pakistan has no intention to flame the fire but if

situation was imposed on us we know how to respond. Lawyer and activities, Jibrán Nasir also condemned the attack and said there were no justification of breaching the territorial integrity of other state when there were the channel of communication between the two states (Abdullah, 2024). Even the Iranian geopolitical experts haven't positive opinion about this attack. They were of view that it was Iran's "strategic mistake" and completely 'Irrational decision' (Dawn, 2024).

At the time of attack the diplomatic ties of both states were quite normal. The diplomats and navies of both states were indulged in collaborations and co-operations. In Davos, Switzerland, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Kakar, was engaged with Foreign Minister of Iran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian in World Economic Forum (54th annual meeting) and looking for avenues of economic cooperation between the two states. According to Iranian media Mr. Kakar expressed his desire to strengthen trade relation with Iran and also called for joint efforts to combat the challenges both states were facing especially the menace of terrorism and Iranian attack came after one hour of this meeting. Due to on-going situation Mr. Kakar had to cut short his visit of Davos. A trade delegation from Pakistan was on Iranian soil and an Iranian delegation was expected to visit Pakistan to strengthen the already existing trade ties (Khalid, 2024). Moreover, the navies of both states were conducted joint naval exercises in strait of Hurmaz, Persian Gulf. Officers from navies of both states carried out 'tactical maneuvers and communication practice' to defend their water borders (Nathan, 2024).

In Pakistan this attack was taken very seriously and retaliated after two days. On January 18, 2024, Pakistani forces targeted sanctuaries or hideout of Baluch separatists in Sistan area of Baluchistan, Iran. Pakistan launched intelligence based operation which was given the code-name "*Marg Bar Sarmachar*". *Sarmachar* is a Persian word means belligerents or insurgents, so *Marg Bar Sarmachar* means to crush or death to insurgents. According to the ISPR, military took "Precision Strikes" against the hideouts of BLF and BLA. These terrorist organizations were involved in multiple terrorist activities in Pakistan and operating from Iran. The military used drones, rockets and other weapons to target the terrorists while collateral damage was avoided. ISPR issued the named of dead terrorists that were Dosta Alias Chairman, Bajjar Alias Soghat, Sahil Alias Shafaq, Asghar Alias Basham, and Wazir Alias Wazir (The Nation, 19 Jan 2024). Pakistan claimed that the "sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Iran was fully respected during this operation. Pakistan consistently informed the authorities of Iran about these terrorists and their safe haven in

ungoverned border area of Iran. Pakistan even shared the dossiers of these terrorists and their activities in Pakistan with Iran but Iranian authorities had shown no interest in it (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

The foreign Ministry of Iran condemned the retaliation by Pakistan. They confirmed that the dead ones were not the citizens of Iran. But they claimed that nine people died due to the attack by Pakistani forces including four children and three women. This was the first foreign attack on Iranian soil after the 1980's when the Saddam Hussein led Iraqi forces launched eight years long war with Iran (Mao, 2024).

The operation conducted by Pakistani forces against terrorists in Iran was acknowledged and appreciated by Pakistani citizens, eminent leaders and government officials. It was lauded by President Arif Alvi and leaders of various political parties of Pakistan. They also acknowledged the professional capability and efficiency of armed forces of Pakistan that are well equipped to defend their border. President Alvi stressed that all the problems and issues between the two brother states would be resolved by peaceful means. He said terrorism was a global challenge that would be eliminated through joint efforts. He expressed his concerns that hostility between the two states was not in the interest of both nations that were already facing many problems. Former Prime Minister and President of PML (N), Mian Shahbaz Sharif, said Pakistan wanted to resolve all issues with Iran by peaceful means but on the other hand our forces know how to defend our territorial integrity. He said defending its border was the right of Pakistan. Former president of Pakistan and PPP leader, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari said peace with neighbouring states was the corner stone of the foreign policy of Pakistan and it was one of the strongest advocate of peace across the globe but when someone violate its territorial integrity then its forces know how to defend their state. He said Pakistan army was among the best armies of world and want cordial relations with other states but on the basis of parity. PTI in its statement also condemned Iranian action and supported the action taken by Pakistan army and said sovereignty of Pakistan was of utmost importance and no aggression would be bearable. Mr. Abdul Qayyum the President of Ex-servicemen Society (PEC) condemned the hostility of Iran and said Iran action deflected the attention of world community from the atrocities and brutality of Israel in the Middle East. He appreciated the timely response of Pakistani armed forces. He described Iran's action as violation of International law and diplomatic blunder. Lt. Gen ® Talat Masood said both sides of border were unpopulated and underdeveloped and prone to militants that were getting support from some external sources especially from India to

destabilized Pakistan and create bad image of Pakistan internationally. Senator, Farhatullah Babar said the Iranian attack was totally unprecedented but Pakistan's retaliation was appropriate and clear message for other to rethink before challenging the sovereignty of Pakistan (Dawn January 22, 2024).

Even the leaders of religious parties irrespective of creed also came forward and supported reaction of armed forces of Pakistan and criticized the unilateral and unwise action of Iran. Central Secretary General of JUI-F, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, also extended its supported for the retaliation of Pakistan. Mr. Agha Syed Hussain Muqassasi, the chief of Tehreek-I-Nafaz-I-Jafariya said that Shia community was also there to defend its motherland. He criticized Iran by saying that the action of Iran was deviation from the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini which were all about the unity of Muslim community. Central Jamiat Alh-I-Hadis Pakistan and students organizations in Pakistan organized rallies against the Iran and they were displaying placards with statements, when Iran would launch missile attack against Israel (*Iran, Isreal k khilaf kb missile attack kary ga*) (Kalbe, 2024).

Other than the reaction from Pakistan and Iran the reaction on Iran-Pakistan border escalation was also observed from world community.

International Response on Escalation between Iran and Pakistan:

China a closer partner of Iran and time tested friend of Pakistan played a positive role to de-escalate tension between the two states. China is biggest oil buyer of Iran and has been involved in economic projects in Baluchistan (Pakistan) where Iran launched the attack. To maintain peaceful relations between Iran and Pakistan was also in the favour of China to gain its aim in region. Chinese government asked both states to 'restraint' and maintains the peace and stability in the region. Mao Ning, the Chinese Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a briefing that China considered Pakistan and Iran as major Muslim states and expect from them to restraint from an action that would lead to further escalation. China offered its mediation to de-escalate tension between the two neighbourly states. China stressed to maintain the policy of dialogue and communication to diffuse tension and offered if both states feel it necessary China could play its positive and constructive role between the two states (Dawi, 2024). Many analysts believe that Pakistan launched strike against BLA and BLF after getting confidential green signal from China because Chinese offer of mediation came after the Pakistani revengeful strike. Chinese were getting threats from BLA to evacuate from all economic project from the land of Baluchs otherwise they would ready for consequences, so this was the right time for Pakistan and China to learn some lesson to these

BLA led militants. On the other hand few analyst believe that Chinese's offer of mediation enhance the international prestige of China to maintain peace and policy of dialogue to remove differences. They also believed that China is fulfilling the vacuum of leadership at international level that US has created in past two decades (Syed, 2024). Turkey also advised both states to remain calm. The Turkish foreign minister, Hakan Fidan, said that there was already tension in the region and there was no space for other tension. He talked with his counterpart in Pakistan and Iran and offered the mediation between the Muslim states (Alarabia News, 2024).

American also condemned the action of Iran. According to the State Department of US, Iran had violated the territorial integrity of three states (Pakistan, Iraq and Syria) in couple of day. It declared that Iran was the source of instability in the region. State Department spokesperson, Mathew Miller in her statement called Iran as "leading founder" of terrorism in the region (Asfandyar, 2024). American already criticized the Iranian backing of the Houthi rebels that had attacked the Washington and London's ships in Red Sea. Zalmay Khalilzad the former U.S special representative on Afghanistan said that both Iran and Pakistan need to sign some sort of agreement to not allow anyone (terrorists and militants) to use their territory against the other nations. He further said that there was a need to take diplomatic initiative to avoid escalation and repetitions of such incident in future. He also stressed for 'Confidence Building Measures' between the two states.

Russia also expressed its concern on on-going situation in SCO members. Russian foreign ministry in its statement said the situation was aggravated by those elements that didn't want peace and stability in the region. Russia advised both states to demonstrate least 'restraint.' It called for both states to solve their issues by using diplomatic channel and led down those who wants chaos in the region. Even the Taliban led government in Afghanistan stressed both states to use diplomatic means to dissolve the dispute. UN Secretary General also expressed his concern over the exchange of missile strikes between the Iran and Pakistan. He urged both states to restrain and avoid the escalation. He said both states would resolve the issue amicably and peacefully ((The Indian Express, 2024).

India justified Iran action as 'self-defence'. Mr. Randhir Jaisal, the spokesman of ministry of external affairs with reference to escalation between Iran and Pakistan said it was the matter between Iran and Pakistan. He said that India had 'uncompromising position of zero tolerance towards terrorism but can understand the action of states taken in self-defence (The Indian Express, 2024).'

Escalation: Internal and External Challenges both States Facing

The tension arose between the two states when international and national environment of both states were already fragile. Middle East was already burning due to the Israel continues attacks on Palestine since October 7, 2023 and had taken almost 25,000 lives of innocent Palestinian. Air strikes and fighting have also observed in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and the Red Sea in last weeks. Before violating the territory of Pakistan, Iran claimed that it had hit the Israeli spy bases in Iraq and ISIL in Syria. Houthi Rebels that have the support of Iran have also targeted various ships in Red Sea and disrupted the international trade routes. Washington and London retaliated and launched series of strikes against these rebels (AlJazeera, Jan 24, 2024). Iran was already facing international sanctions and criticism but expanding its mighty regionally. Iran has not in good term with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan always offered its mediation to foster friendly ties between the two Islamic states. So, the sudden soar relations with such a neighbour that is in good term, is not in the favour of Iran when she is already under international criticism.

Iran is also facing political turmoil since Iranian Revolution (1979). People haven't trust in current regime and they were in streets and protesting against regime. Even women were protesting against regime for their rights and they were in streets and demanding their fundamental rights. Against these protest regime was using the power and resulting in unrest in the state. On the other hand the inflation, unemployment, international sanctions and hardships of life make it hard for Iran to economically move forward.

The geographical location of Pakistan s already creating trouble for it or Pakistan's geography made her a prisoner. The western and eastern borders ere not peaceful since its inception. Periodically she has to face challenges from eastern and western border. Tension on its eastern border always persists despite the ceasefire but exchange of fire was the order of the day. Now the relations with Taliban regime was also not cordial due to the backing of Taliban to TTP, an anti-Pakistan insurgent group involved in militant activities in Pakistan and targeting the security personnel of Pakistan. So she could not afford the animosity from its third neighbour, Iran shares border with its largest but underdeveloped province, Baluchistan. This province was already at some places hostage of external hands especially Indian spy involvement to destabilize the government of Pakistan by instigating the people of Baluchistan province against their central government as BLA and BLF were working. Even after Iran strikes in Pakistan, Iran got support only from India.

The political and economic environment of Pakistan was also not favorable for taking any risk from its south-western neighbour. From last one year there was political instability in Pakistan due to the outset of Imran Khan Government and consequent protest in major cities of Pakistan. Currently interim government was working in Pakistan and elections date was announced as February 8, 2024 and pre-election processions were going on in all major cities of Pakistan. The economic condition of Pakistan was also delicate like Iran. According to 760 pages report published by Human Right Watch in 2024, the year of 2023 was the worst economic year for Pakistan. During this year Pakistan faced worst economic challenge of its history. In this year poverty, unemployment, inflation, poor health and living conditions were on peak. Even climatic vulnerability was above the average (Dawn, 2024).

Due to fragile economic, political, and internal and external security challenges it was not wise enough to escalate the prevailing conflict on border of both states. The governments of both states understand this and tried for normalization of relations.

Normalization of Relations:

On January 19, a meeting of National Security Council of Pakistan was held under the chairmanship of caretaker Prime Minister Anwal ul Haq Kakar. The meeting was attended by the high dignitaries of Pakistan, Caretaker Ministers for Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Information, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of the Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Air Staff and heads of intelligence agencies. The agenda of meeting was to look into the ongoing situation on south-western border of Pakistan and possible outcomes. The committee expressed its commitment that “sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan are absolutely inviolable and sacrosanct and any attempt by anyone to breach it on any pretext will be responded with full might of the state.” In this NSC meeting, Pakistan resolve to defeat the terrorist and condemned all sort of terrorism was lauded. It was also decided to use all possible means of dialogue and communication to defuse the ongoing hostility on Pakistan-Iran border. It was also decided that strengthening of intelligence sharing between the two states can further prevent such situation in future (Business Recorder Jan 19, 2024). Mr. Kakar after this meeting attended the meeting with his cabinet members and said that Pakistan wants pre-Jan 16 relations with Iran. Pakistan was open for any positive development from Iran. Mr. Kakar stance was endorsed and appreciated by his cabinet members (Dawn, 2024).

When Pakistan downgraded its diplomatic relations with Iran due to the violation of its airspace then the first move Iran took towards the normalization of relations was the call

of Iranian foreign minister to his Pakistani counterpart on January 19, when he was on a visit to Kampala, Uganda to attend the Non-Aligned Movement, ministerial meeting. He also curtailed his meeting like P.M Kakar due to the Iran-Pakistan border tension. This conversation took place just after a day when Pakistan in retaliation targeted the hideout of terrorist inside Iran. They discussed about de-escalation of ongoing situation on border and reaffirmed their commitment to work-out on such elements that were the cause of soar relations between the two states. The second telephonic conversation between the Foreign Ministers of two states was carried on January 22. This time both states agreed to reinstate their ambassadors on January 26 and resume the diplomatic ties that were downgraded for time being. On their third telephonic conversation the F.M of Pakistan invited his Iranian counterpart to Pakistan on January 29. This invitation was accepted by the Iranian F.M to expedite the normalization of relations.

These three telephonic conversations between the F.M of two states were quite productive to move back both states on track of normalization of their deteriorated relation in past two weeks. Due to their efforts the ambassadors of both states resume their positions. But the non-states actors were also keeping a deep eye on all these process and progress between these two states. Just a day after the diplomats had taken their positions and two days before the Iranian F.M visit to Pakistan nine Pakistani labours were brutally killed by few unknown gunmen in early hours of morning when they were sleeping. This incident of killing was happened on January 27, in the same area where Pakistani forces had targeted the sanctuaries of terrorists almost one week back. These labours were in Iran on work-visa for eight years and working on an auto repair shop. Iranian media also confirmed that some foreigners were killed by terrorists (Dawn, 2024).

Pakistan Foreign Office lodged its protest over the killing of Pakistani nationals. Mrs. Baluch said the attack was “horrifying and despicable” and demanded comprehensive investigation against the responsible. The Pakistan ambassador to Iran, Mr. Muhammad Muddasir Tipu, also expressed his shock over the incident and he met with those who were injured during this incident (January 28, 2024). Iranian foreign ministry also condemned the killing of innocent Pakistani workers and assured Pakistan for Iranian government did not allow “enemies” to damage the fraternal relations between the two states. They also assured to extend full support to deceased families. The Iranian envoy to Pakistan also expressed their concerns over the killing of innocent Pakistani workers (Daily Times, 2024).

The aims and objectives of the enemies of Iran and Pakistan were undermined when the Iranian foreign minister paid scheduled visit to Pakistan. Iranian foreign minister landed in Pakistan on January 29. During his visit he met with Army Chief, Gen. Asim Munir, caretaker Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan. The main agenda of his visit was the discussion and deliberations over the security concerns and issues between the two states. Gen. Asim Munir discouraged the unilateral action taken by Iran on January 16. He stressed for strong communication channel between the two states to address the security concerns of both states. Mr. Kakar emphasis the need for bilateral cooperation and collaboration to address the security concerns according to the norms of international laws and following the UN charter. He also stressed to keep the territorial integrity and sovereignty holy while dealing with each-other. Iranian Foreign Minister said “third country” was supporting these terrorists or militants in border areas to undermine the relations between the two brotherly states but they would work against such elements as “one nation”. He further said the purpose of his visit was to give a clear message to terrorists that both states would not allow anyone to hamper their foster relations. Both states agreed to enhance economic cooperation between them. They suggested “Early Operationalization of the Joint Border Markets” for the sake of economic cooperation. They also agreed to appoint ‘Liaison Officers in Turban and Zahedan’ to strengthened the security and intelligence coordination between the two states (Dawn. January 30, 2024).

The visit of Iranian foreign minister was a milestone to diffuse the tension between the two states. Both states wisely handled the situation and maintained the peace. To further improve the relations between Pakistan and Iran the Pakistani foreign minister also extended its invitation to President of Iran to visit Pakistan after the establishment of new government in Pakistan as election date was announced February 8 in Pakistan (Dawn. January 30, 2024).

Conclusion:

Iran breaches the territory of Pakistan by targeting the hideout of Jaish al-Adle in Baluchistan. The justification Iran extended was the response of attack by Jasih al-Adle on its security personnel in December 2023. This attack was a shocked for Pakistan. Not only the government official criticized this attack of Iran but it was negatively perceived by the every segment of Pakistan. Pakistan retaliated on Iranian unilateral strikes by targeting the sanctuaries of BLA and BLF inside Iran. After tit for tat both states more towards the normalization of relation by restoring their diplomatic ties that was dropped down just after the Iran strike. As the both states moved towards the normalization process the non-state

actors tried to halt this process. These elements do not want the cordial relation between the two brotherly states. Iran claimed that these actors have the support of US to destabilize the Iran while Pakistan claimed that these actors have strong support from India to exploit these elements against their central government. The analysis shows that whenever both states tried to enhance their economic ties these elements became more active and expand their terrorist activities. This episode was also observed when last year both states express their resolve to counter the menace of terrorism and developed economic ties. When even the both states now tried to normalize their relations the Pakistani personnel targeted in Iran by unknown gunmen. But both states tackle it wisely. In Pakistan at various places around the Iranian installation like Iranian Cultural Centers and Consulate General, the security was tightened by deploying police personnel to protect these areas and to control unavoidable condition (Dawn 19 Jan 2024).

The analysis shows that the cause of soreness between the two states was their ungoverned and underdeveloped areas on either side of their shared border. People living in these areas have grievances about their respective government and they can be exploited by the non-states actors that could use their sentiments for their own motives. If Iran and Pakistan follow the model of China, as she did in Xinjiang province then they can prevent their people to become the victim of foreign hands. The people of Xinjiang province were against their central government and demanding the separation from mainland China. This western region of China has plenty of energy and mineral resources. Chinese government started developing this region even through CPEC, China has connected this area to Gwardar and converted this underdeveloped area into economic hub of state and utilized the potential of this area. So government of Pakistan and Iran also developed these areas by establishing industries, factories, education centers, health care centers and providing the job opportunities to the local people and use their energies positively for the betterment of their own areas as well as for the state. Instead of third country use them for their purpose. This would also minimize the cross border smuggling and drug trafficking that is also immense challenge for both state and improve the trade relations between the two states.

Tightening security on both sides of the border can prevent the both states from the cross border infiltrate of the terrorists and helpful to curb the anti-state element or such elements that want hostile relations between the two states. Intelligence sharing must be on the top agenda of both states. But the intelligence sharing must be with strong evidence and both states should take it seriously and extend collaboration to achieve the desire results.

The cordial relation between the two states is in favour of both governments for their smooth function. Cordial relations can be improved through the people to people contacts and exchanges. People to people contact can be extended by offering lucrative scholarship programme, cheap visa charges, to attract the people towards the historical and cultural sites.

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