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## **“The Contentious Bilateral Relationship Between Iran-Pakistan: Causes and its Implications.”**

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### **Abstract:**

Two periods may be distinguished in the diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Iran. During the first, both countries enjoyed cordial relations because they are Western allies. The US lost Iran as an ally after the Iranian revolution, which had an impact on the close ties. The delay in the sharing project for gas is example that how both countries struggled to forge close ties due to outside influences. The main obstacle to repairing good ties is the presence of extremist organizations in each other's borders that support the instability of both regimes. The two nations' recent exchange of airstrikes demonstrates how these non-state entities strained their relationship. The primary cause of the aspirations of non-state actors and outside forces is a lack of trust between the two states. Given its already tense relations with Afghanistan and India, Pakistan could not handle the crisis with Iran. The challenges underlying trust

concerns that affect their diplomatic and economic ties will be thoroughly examined in this article. The study would help the researchers to understand the core problem behind diplomatic relations and policy makers might be understand the need to normalize the relations with Iran.

**Key Words:** Pakistan, Iran, Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, USA, Militancy, Jaish-ul-AdI, Baluchistan Liberation Army.

### **1. Introduction:**

Iran's ambition to rise to prominence in the area is greatly influenced by its geographic location. This country-state is situated at a key crossroads where the worlds of Islam, Turkey, Russia, and India converge. After regime change in 1979, the nation-state proclaimed itself as Islamic state, with an "unitary presidential" system of governance. Iran aspires to be recognized as a major regional force. But unfortunately this won't be feasible for as long as it continues to be the major adversary of the only superpower in the world. The truth is that the aforementioned superpower considered it as a major hurdle for implementing its Middle East policies. Nevertheless, Iran does its best given that it is encircled by US military installations in Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Gulf States, and Iraq (Munoz, 2008).

Pakistan is ideally situated at the intersection of three major Asian continents: as India, Afghanistan, China, and Iran are the neighboring states. Because of

its advantageous location, Pakistan may now serve as a major hub for trade, energy, and transportation. Above all, Pakistan serves as a bridge to the abundant in energy Central Asian countries, and the Gulf Countries. Pakistan offers countless opportunities just by virtue of its advantageous position. The two-dimensional influence of geography cannot be ignored; it has benefits as well as drawbacks, but regrettably, despite its many advantages, a nation state faces numerous internal and foreign issues (Rana, 2021).

One well-known theory explaining the rise of separatist movements is called "Ethnicity as Conflictual Theory," which essentially holds that the formation of separatist movements is primarily driven by differences in ethnic identity within society. When ethnic minority lack security or stability, the central authority's inability to create a workable political or economic structure for them gives them strong grounds to launch separatist activities in pursuit of their own independence (Robby, 2021).

Strong relationships between the Baloch ethnic community, which is present in Pakistan's Baluchistan region and Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan, are one of the major factors affecting the two countries' bilateral relations. The president of Iran gave greater assistance to Pakistan to put an end to the Baloch independence movement before to the revolution, and these two neighboring states expanded security collaboration against separatist freedom fighters.

Despite disagreements, both nations established security cooperation in 1979 even after the central governments changed (Kaleji, 2012). The current governments faced significant challenges in addressing threats to its territorial integrity and sovereignty due to the emergence of separatist groups, which has resulted in tensions among the populace. The scholars study clarify how ethnicity plays a part in the demand for the right to self-determination. Furthermore, cross-border relationships between ethnic groups are a major factor in the occurrence of violent confrontations (Lewis, 2022). Though international experts tend to focus mostly on the Baloch militancy. Baluchistan's escalating militancy is thought to be the cause of the province's impending explosion, which is expected to cause a repercussions (Basit, 2018).

Freedom struggles are not only a threat to the peace in their immediate area; they also pave the way for foreign intervention and the initiation of worldwide conflicts. In their study "Multi-Ethnic State Building: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention," the authors discussed how they believe that new ethnic conflicts reveal the covert roles of geopolitics, power struggles among nations, and international intervention. One of the main causes of external interference is that independent seeking groups collaborate with other nations when central governments are unable to address the issues facing by freedom fighters (Pan & Xiao, 2023).

By assessing the obstacles to the execution of gas sharing program, this study aimed to explore the bilateral partnership. This article try to examine causes behind growing Baloch militancy in the provinces of both nations and talk about how militant organizations might disrupt the status quo of law and order or cause tensions in bilateral relations.

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## **2. Problem Statement:**

Pakistan and Iran are adjacent by 900 kilometers, share the same religion and cultural customs, and face similar ethnic and security challenges. This is the fundamental reason that both nations joined the US alliance during the Cold War, however this strategic collaboration was primarily impacted after the Afghan War due to changes in Pakistani politics, Iran's political leadership in 1979, and the global politics. The primary cause of the deteriorating relationship is the terrorist group "Jaish-al-AdI," which has been fighting against Iran for the independence of Sistan and Baluchistan. Building confidence and fostering economic cooperation necessitated the bilateral talks about this conflict.

### **3. Study Inquiries:**

1. Why did two Muslim countries launched their most recent airstrikes?
2. Why has the IP gas pipeline project not started yet and what are its advantages for Pakistan?
3. How can the mistrust between the two nations be reconciled?

### **4. Historical Background:**

#### *4.1: Ties on Political Front:*

##### *➤ About initial stage:*

Pakistan formation, created the groundwork for the relations between Iran and Pakistan. On August 14, 1947, Pakistan's sovereignty was acknowledged for the first time by Iran. Due to their shared religion and culture, both countries have deep ties. In May 1950, they even formalized a covenant of friendship. Iran's Shah Reza Pahlavi, who pursued a policy of cordial relations, became the first president of the state to make a trip to the neighboring nation in 1956. Bilateral security concerns, geopolitical interests, and changes in the political identities of the two governments have all influenced the relationship between the neighbors. Pakistan proved to be Iran's ally in advancing its interests. Iran and Pakistan joined the West's alliance during the Cold War, and they were the part an anti-communist coalition (Karim, 2022).

Loyalty are put to the test by conflicts. Iran demonstrated its reliability as a friend to Pakistan by fully backing it in its battles with India in 1965 and 1971. An announcement from the Iranian Foreign Ministry during the start of the conflict in 1965 stated, "We are concerned at India's aggression against Pakistan." Following the war in 1965, Iran served as a "dealer," obtaining weapons from German market and subsequently supplying Pakistan with them. This helped Pakistan overcome its shortage of armaments. Iran purchased copious amounts military assets from West Germany when Pakistan was unable to obtain military hardware from the West despite a member of military defense agreement CENTO. Pakistan received 12 helicopters from Iran during the war of 1971, along with military supplies such ammunition, artillery, and replacement parts. Iran additionally supplied Pakistan with oil throughout the conflict at a lower cost, per a document from the US Department of Foreign Relations. However, the 1971 Indian actions were denounced as obvious aggression by the Shah of Iran. Iranian president declined to join a meeting in Pakistan in 1974 because to Pakistan's invitation of Muammar Gaddafi, the leader of Libya. Pakistan's request to denounce India over the 1974 Smiling Buddha nuclear test was also rejected by Iran. Change regime forced the former president to escaped to the United States. Pakistan was the first nation to acknowledge the new Iranian government (Mukul, 2024).



Iran's president demanded Bhutto to launch a military operation against the Baloch Liberation Front because, in Iran's opinion, these rebel groups were used by Iraq to undermine law and order in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. However, Iran was not pleased with Bhutto's ignorance policy and his shift toward Arabs. Diplomatic relations were ruined as a result of this circumstance. Zia did all in his power to mend diplomatic ties with Iran's leadership after the country's regime changed and the new Islamic state began to emerge, but they were viewed as US allies (Rana, 2016).

➤ *Impact of Iranian Revolution on bilateral relationship:*

The 1979 regime change brought about by the Islamic revolution headed by Ayatollah Khomeini was the cause of the unbalance in their bilateral relationship. Pakistan was undergoing a period of "Islamization" during the time under the military dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq. If the sectarian divide hadn't been as evident as it was, perhaps ties between the two nations could have improved even more. With a mainly Sunni population, Pakistan had been polarized by General Zia's strict religious doctrines, whereas Iran had a Shia majority. Iran began providing funds to Shi'ite religious organizations in Pakistan in the 1990s, this involvement damaged the diplomatic ties further. On the other side financial backing for Sunni groupings in Pakistan was provided by Arab nations. Hence, a sectarian divide between two grew responsible for religious disputes in that country. As violence

between sects increased in frequency throughout the nation, the situation became catastrophic. Further, when things in Afghanistan deteriorated, the trust could not grow. After the Taliban's seizure of Kabul's government, Tehran supported the Northern Alliance, and Pakistan accepted the new government in Afghanistan (Raza, 2020).

Tehran and Islamabad now enjoy tight ties as a result of the Taliban's collapse following the September 11 attacks and Pakistan's sincere attempts to eradicate sectarianism from the nation. During his visit to Islamabad, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi pledged that both nations will handle the Afghan crisis in the same way. Both nations declared their desire for a United Nations-backed, multiethnic, inclusive government in Kabul. Notwithstanding these encouraging gestures, disagreements persisted on a few crucial areas, such as Pakistan's participation in the alliance against terrorism and the U.S. However, Islamabad expressed alarm on Tehran's tight ties to New Delhi. The issue regarding accessibility to the Central Asian states rich in minerals was another point of contention. Iran maintains that Chabahar and Bander Abbas are the best ports for connecting to the international community, whereas Pakistan believes that Gwadar and the port of Qasim are the quickest ways (Yousafzai & Shah, 2022).

The regional security landscape that followed 9/11 drew the America and Iranian nearer together because Iranian adversaries were defeated by the US

in 2001: the Taliban, an ideological and political danger in Afghanistan, In 2003, Iran faced a regional security threat from Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Iran modified its stances about the US's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan in exchange for the US providing logistical support for US maneuvers in that country.

➤ *Disclosing of Iranian Atomic Program and its diplomatic relations with Pakistan:*

2002 disclosure of Iran's nuclear program provided another point of contention between the two nations. Both parties' opposing positions on the nuclear issue an America asserting that Iranian leadership tried to became atomic power for people demolition and the Iranians claiming they wants to acquire atomic energy to safe our country. Iran considered the 2006 UN regime restrictions and the Additional Protocol to the NPT deal to be harmful (Hussain, 2015).

Pakistan's foreign policy faced significant obstacles prior to 9/11. Anxiety surrounding the Kashmir dispute escalated further in the wake of the 1999 Kargil incident. The Pakistan atomic explosions in response to India test in 1998 had already increased the possibility of a regional arms race. Pakistan was consequently subject to economic sanctions from important trading nations like the US. It made an already fragile economy that was already

experiencing poor growth rates, an ongoing financial deficit, growing price increases, a fiscal imbalance, and significant foreign debt obligations get worse. Because of its proximity to Afghanistan, Pakistan has therefore once more become a supporter of US in war on terror under President Musharraf's rule (Gulzar & Gulzar, 2018).

Openly, Pakistan stands with Iranian leadership on issue of acquiring atomic weapons. The United States asserts that scientists working for the Pakistani military are complicit in Iran's acquisition of nuclear capability; Pakistan, however, formally rejects this. Pakistan refuted a US media allegation, which claimed that Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan had given Iran nuclear-related data and materials. Speaker of the Pakistan National Assembly Fahmida Mirza stated, "Pakistan refuses to support any sort of restrictions over Iran and considers that its nuclear conflicts should be settled through dialogue," during a separate meeting with an Iranian official in 2010 she reassured Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that Pakistan supports Iran's independence and advancements in all domains, particularly its peaceful utilization of nuclear power ( Farrar-Wellman, 2010).

## **5. US as External Factor in Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project:**

### *5.1: Historical Background:*

The idea of building a gas pipeline was initially discussed in the 1990s. It was decided to form the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project during these discussions. India withdrew from this project in 2009 for a number of reasons, including insecurity in Pakistan's Baluchistan and conflicts over gas pricing and transit fees. The primary reason was India's civilian nuclear pact with the US. The gas pipeline was formally inaugurated in 2013 during President Asif Ali Zardari's administration. It began in the Iranian city of Asaluyeh and traveled from there to the ports of Chahbahar and Gwadar in Pakistan, then on to Nawabshah and Multan. However, the US and Saudi Arabia have had some international impact on the development of IP, and Pakistan's system has internal flaws like contradictory and unclear foreign policy (Sial, 2015).

These days, energy security is a major issue that brings politics and economics together. When one studies the positions taken by superpowers on previous projects, one can see how important energy security is. Moscow was interested in helping to build and provide financial backing for the Iran-India gas project. Conversely, the US is adamantly against this gas proposal. The US advised Pakistan to pursue the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline instead of the IP gas pipeline project since it would not require Iran (Sial, 2007).

**Figure: 1**



Source: (Imtiaz et al., 2019). Pakistan-Iran Relations Economic and Political Dimensions.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Iran-Pakistan-Pipeline-Project\\_fig2\\_344831604](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Iran-Pakistan-Pipeline-Project_fig2_344831604)

Raise believes that this initiative is a solid choice in his article, "Not a Pipedream." Furthermore, he says, "This pipeline can only address the energy crisis issue in 15 months. Pakistan's economy will benefit from a daily gas consumption of 21.5 million cubic meters. In the event that Pakistan is unable to operationalize this gas pipeline project, it may face a more severe energy deficit than the consequences from the US side on starting this project with Iran. The IP initiative was backed by a number of Pakistani political figures who believed that their country's interests should come first instead of US interests. For instance, Nawab Zulfiqar Ali Magsi, previously serving governor of Baluchistan, expresses his enthusiasm in the IP initiative by saying that it will benefit Pakistan (Munir et al., 2013).

*5.2: Iran-Pakistan gas project in current Scenario:*

Both nations decided in 2019 to finish this project by 2024. In order to achieve this, an amendment to the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project was proposed. Under this plan, Pakistan would build the necessary infrastructure and be required to purchase nearly 750 million cubic feet of gas per day from Iran. Iran will file a complaint in an International Court of Arbitration against Pakistan to pay a fine if it is unable to do this (Ahmadani, 2019). Ultimately, the modifications to the Iran-Pakistan gas project are signed by both countries by consent. (Mustafa, 2019). Iran asserts that it has invested \$2 billion to finish this project on its behalf. On the other hand, if Pakistan doesn't finish this project, it could face a legal dispute with Iran. Instead of pursuing a court battle, PM Shehbaz Sharif considered using diplomatic means to resolve this dispute (Bhutta, 2023).

Iran's Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian during meeting with Jalil Abbas Jalani, the caretaker foreign minister of Pakistan, offered a suggestion, if Pakistan is unable to finish it on time because of US sanctions against Iran, Russia and China could provide financial support to complete this project (Hussain, 2024). Iran has agreed to visit a team consisting of individuals with legal or technical skills to discuss IP projects with the newly elected administration in Pakistan following the wrapping up of the country's general election (Iqbal & Hussain, 2024).

## **6: Separatist Militant groups and strained Bilateral Relationship:**

### *6.1: Causes of Militancy in Southern Region of Iran:*

Despite the overwhelming Shia Muslim population, Iran's population is split along linguistic, ethnic, and religious lines. In the case of Sistan and Baluchistan, there were around 1.6 million Sunni Muslim Baloch living in this region. The Baloch minority in Iran is without a doubt the most disadvantaged by racism; most Iranian regimes that have been in power have discriminated against them on the basis of their religious beliefs. The administrations of Shah to Ahmadinejad and Hasan Rouhan are the best examples. Sistan and Baluchistan is one of Iran's most impoverished and destitute regions. Regretfully, this area has also seen natural calamities in the past, such as famines and climate change, which have harmed its natural resources. In terms of fundamental necessities like access to clean water, sanitary conditions, and literacy, this region fares among the most impoverished. Without a doubt, this region has enough natural resources for Iran, including uranium, oil, and gas. This is the primary cause of the attempts made by previous administrations to maintain control over the province's natural riches at the expense of its social and economic advancement. Additionally, the freedom of speech and the right to journalism are restricted in this area. However, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International organizations, draw attention to the worst violations of human rights. According to their



assessments, Iran's political leadership is always attempting to regulate the crushing of dissenting opinions on the name national security, regional growth and peace. Thus freedom of expression is also cited as a major issue in Iran (Rehman, 2014).

### *6.2: History behind originating separatists group in Sistan & Baluchistan:*

During the 1990s, Maula Bux Darakhshan established Sipah-e-Rasool Allah, also known as the "Army of the Prophet of ALLAH," in Iran. The initial attack on Sistan and Baluchistan, Iran, was launched by this group from Baluchistan, Pakistan. Given the label of jihad to the opposition of Sunni Muslim groups, this outfit was undoubtedly aided by some anti-Shia factions in Pakistan. Following Mauluk's passing in 2006, Mullah Omar, his brother, assumed leadership of Sipah-e-Rasool Allah. In addition, he persisted in his attempts to get revenge from the Iranian regime for the killing of his brother. The first Iranian missile to strike the Omar in Kulahu was launched in 2013. This organization worked with Abdul Malik Rigi's Jundullah terrorist group in order to thwart the target killing (Baloch, 2024). Known as "Soldiers of God," the Jundallah militant group was established in 2003 in order to struggle for betterment of Baloch minority group (Nada, 2021).

Jundallah carried out two deadly assaults in the Sistan and Baluchistan province of Iran. In the first, a suicide attack occurred, and in the second, a

group of soldiers' car was attacked. More than 40 Iranians were murdered in these two strikes, five of them were senior security officers. The UN, the US, the UK, and Pakistan all strongly denounced the strikes. The president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, accused Pakistan explicitly, saying, "We have evidence that some security officials were involved in backing these bloody attacks." However, the foreign minister of Iran, Manouchehr Mottaki said that Jundallah was in charge of initiating these assaults. He issued a dire warning, threatening not only to shut down Iran's border with Pakistan around Baluchistan but also to launch a military strike on the Jundallah group in Pakistan. In a meeting with Rehman Malik in Islamabad, Interior Minister Mustafa Mohammad Najjar stated that we have proof that the chief leader of Jundallah was from Pakistan and that he ought to be sent to Iran (Pattanayak, n.d).

Leader of Jundallah, Abdulmalek Rigi claims that his organization fights the Iranian regime to better the lives of our Baloch people, who are still being genocide. He has also asserted that, in spite of Iranian accusations, we are Iranian and improving the standard of living for the Baloch people is our main objective in our struggle, not gaining independence or igniting sectarian problems. An entirely new chapter in the insurgent group's conflict with the Iranian government began with the group's most hazardous act, which involved attacking a Shi'a mosque in Zahedan. Given that Jundallah's suicide

attack followed Al Qaida's pattern, successive Iranian governments have expressed concern about an upsurge in terrorism linked to this organization. Iran asserted that the US and its coalition partners are responsible for this bloody insurgency on their homeland. However, Iran has also claimed that Pakistan sponsors the jihadist group Jundallah and views Jundallah as an extremist group that is "based in Pakistan" (Zambelis, 2009).

The extremist group Jundullah succumbed in 2012, leading to the creation of Jaish ul-Adl. (Hussain, 2024). The militant group Jaish Al AdI, also known as the "Army of Justice," fights to free the Baloch Sunni Muslim community in Sistan and Baluchistan from Iran due to unfair treatment or lack of justice by the Iranian government's previous administrations. Although they describe themselves as liberation fighters for justice, they are viewed as terrorists by Iran and other nations. Former members of the militant group Jundullah founded this organization after it was destroyed by Iranian security forces (Hilton, 2024).

Under Qasim Soleimani's direction, the Quds Force has been training young people from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other countries to fight for Iranian goals in an effort to increase its power and influence throughout the whole region. On January 3, 2020, in Iraq, Soleimani was assassinated by an American drone missile in response to those operations. According to American stance; he had been organizing attack to kill United States

diplomats; that's why they killed him to protect our people. Security and regional affairs analyst Nadeem Ahmed stated: "Sectarian infiltration has significantly increased in the region over the last few years. I believe that Qasem Soleimani's death will significantly reduce the intensity of this sectarian conflict." According to Omar Farooq, security researcher in Islamabad; Soleimani's Iranian forces were engaged in the genocide of Sunni Baloch not merely in Iran but also in the neighboring portions of the Pakistani territory of Baluchistan additionally (Kakar, 2020).

There are still violent clashes between insurgent groups and Iranian soldiers. Jaish ul-Adl's brutal strikes severely damaged the southern province of Iran. It recently launched an attack against Iranian forces in December 2022, leaving many of them wounded or dead. In May 2023, five soldiers lost their lives in the Saravan region of Baluchistan during an armed confrontation. Then, in July, members of this group carried out an attack on a Zahedan military installation, leaving two police officers dead. Fascinatingly, the assailants would rather use armed assaults against the military and jeopardize human existence than commit suicide bombing (Safiullah, 2023).

### *6.3: Baluch Nationalist Groups in Pakistan:*

Baluchistan has witnessed a resurgence of ethno-national movements ever since independence from British rule in 1947. Pakistan is as ancient as the Baluch Nationalist struggle. In terms of land area, Baluchistan is the largest

province, least populous, and of significant strategic importance. Regretfully, nonetheless, because of the central authority's carelessness in both civil and military governance, it has not flourished despite its strategic position. It's true that Pakistan hasn't succeeded in creating a sense of nationalism because of the diversity of its ethnic and religious groupings. As a result, this province is currently a source of conflict for Pakistan and a focal point for the international world, all of whom continue to support the separatist movement in this area in accordance with their own objectives (Akhtar, 2013).

The continued existence of social injustice, human rights violations, and economic disparity is the reason behind the emergence of the Baloch nationalism movement. Baluch Marri founded and oversaw the insurgent Baloch Liberation Army until his passing in 2007. His brother then assumed leadership of this group advocating for the autonomy of the Baloch people not just for Pakistan, but also for the Baluch of Iran or Afghanistan (Grare, 2013).

## **7: Reasons behind Exchanging Air Strikes between Iran and Pakistan:**

*1) Attack on memorial ceremony of Qassem Soleimani on 3 January, 20024:*

Israel used a drone strike in Syria in December 2023 to assassinate Sayyed Razi Mousavi, the senior commander of Iran. Then, on January 3, the eve of the Qassem Soleimani memorial ceremony, there were two attacks in Kerman

that left many civilians injured and perhaps 90 Iranians dead. The attack was claimed to have been carried out by the Iraq. Yet, Iran claimed that Israel was responsible for these blasts and had provided facilities for anti-Iranian groups in Syria and Erbil. In response, Iran fired missiles into Syria and later the Iraqi city of Erbil. These assaults have the potential to exacerbate Middle East tensions. Iran made its position on the attacks against the terrorist group ISIL in Syria very apparent. And Mossad, an Israeli agency, was the target of the strike in Iraq. Four individuals died in the Iranian attack, according to Iraq (Cordall, 2024).

*2) Jaish-ul AdI, Sunni Militant group in Pakistan:*

In a first-ever display of aggression between the neighbors, Pakistan and Iran both carried out strikes on one other's territory at an occasion when hostilities have drastically increased throughout the Middle East as well as globally. Iran fired missiles into the region of Baluchistan, Pakistan, on January 16, 2024. Iran claimed that the missiles were fired not at Pakistani citizens but rather at a terrorist organization that operated in the area and threatened Iranian sovereignty. Naturally, Pakistan was incensed by this action and said that it violated both the favorable bilateral relations between the two nations and international law (Saifi et al, 2024). A missile strike in Baluchistan's Panjgur district lost the lives of two children and injured three more. According to the Iranian Tasnim News Agency, the attack targeted two of the Jaish al-Adl

militant group's bases (Baloch, 2024). Pakistan swiftly responded by recalling its ambassador and deciding to halt all travel to Iran (Sajid, 2024).

### *3) Baluchistan Liberation Army bases in Iran:*

Pakistan successfully launched retaliatory drone strikes against terrorist sites located on Iranian territory on January 18, 2024. Pakistan claims that these extremists were responsible for the recent explosions in Pakistan that claimed the lives of a number of military personnel and civilians. The bases that Pakistan is targeted belongs to terrorist groups. In this military campaign dubbed as "Marg Bar Sarmachar," nationalist organizations, specifically the Baluchistan Liberation Army and Baluchistan Liberation Front, were successfully attacked. India supported these extremist groups militarily and financially while using them against Pakistan. Despite Pakistan's efforts to prove to Iran the existence of these bases operating from their border, Iran refused to believe Pakistan (Mustafa, 2024). Terrorist organization Baluchistan Liberation Army threatened Pakistan, saying, 'We will not remain mute on the deaths of our people caused by Pakistan's recent strikes on Iran. Now, it will have to bear the cost as we have declared war on Pakistan' ( Bhattacharya, 2024).

## **8. Impact of the Recent Escalation on Geopolitics:**

The way the situation develops will depend largely on how the tensions between Iran and Pakistan affect connections with other parties. Following Iran's missile strike, India's S Jaishankar made a visit to Tehran as foreign minister. This visit could reinforce Islamabad's strong allegation that India has been backing the Baluch conflict and strengthening ties with its neighbors in an effort to surround Pakistan. Iran has been seeking a closer strategic alliance, which Jaishankar's visit confirmed. Progress was also made on the Chahbahar port development during his visit. This major trade hub is being developed by Iran and India to counter other regional port initiatives, such as the Gwadar port in Pakistan, which is backed by China. Beijing, at the same time, is in a good position to resolve disputes because of its extensive ties to both Pakistan and Iran. In 2023, it also had a role in facilitating the restoration of bilateral ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. A representative for China's foreign ministry stated during a press briefing that China is prepared to take a "beneficial part in calming the escalated situation." (Bajpae, 2024).

Following Pakistan's retaliatory attacks against Iran, Russia counseled both nations to defuse tensions and find diplomatic solutions to the security issues (Agence France Presse, 2024).



## **9. Future Opportunities for Friendly Relations:**

### *9.1 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as Regional Connectivity:*

Mehdi Honardoost, the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan, stated: "We think the One-belt-one-road is very significant initiative which could promote peace and regional cooperation. Iran is a strategically important country with enormous potential and abilities like travel line and rich in resources. It's possible that the project will not be completed without the energy supply and transportation support of Iran, and that is why Tehran wants to be part of CPEC" (Zafar, 2019). Sun Weidong, the Beijing ambassador to Pakistan, stated that they hope Tehran to participate in this connectivity initiative (Raza, 2019).

### *9.2 Chabahar and Gwadar Cooperation:*

It is predicted that Chabahar and Gwadar will be point of competition between these two countries. Both ports would be built and ready for this kind of competition in a few years. They will benefit in the coming months and years from cooperation, but establishing a partnership of this kind between rival regional entities is challenging. Pakistan and Iran will need to fortify their bilateral ties and shield one another from outside influences in order to ease any such cooperation. There are numerous options for regional connectivity from Gwadar and Chabahar. Both ports may stimulate development for the whole area if politics and economics are kept apart (Khetran, 2018).

## **Recommendations:**

- The rebuilding of trust, which has been lacking since the late 1980s for many reasons, is the most crucial stage in relations between Iran and Pakistan. Rebuilding of trust is critical as the two need to sign CBMs (Khan, 2010).
- Iran is still an economic power with an even GDP, income per person, and wealth of resources notwithstanding US-led restrictions. Pakistan may benefit greatly from Iran's oil reserves, transportation links, and political backing on international fora.
- Pakistan must quickly seize control of and carry out its legal obligations in border regions by working with Iran to establish a shared border security team that would thwart all forms of illicit activity, including transnational terrorism and smuggling (Khalid & Khan, 2020).

## **Conclusion:**

Pakistan and Iran are closely related historically, sharing not only the same landmass and religious beliefs, but also a common culture and heritage. Following the establishment of Pakistan, the already-existing inherent connection and friendship between these two neighbors was dramatically strengthened, and their bilateral relationships grew to an unprecedented degree. Due to a few small annoyances, the two nations haven't been unable

to fully seize chances to strengthen their connections with Tehran and Islamabad over the past 20 years. Aside from the stark contrasts between the two Muslim countries that are brothers, outside forces and outside actors have been crucial in severing their connections. Despite these obstacles, there is yet a path ahead for strengthening and reviving their relationship. Both countries need to restore trust through CBM, resolve their concerns or differences through dialogues. For regional stability both states should continue security cooperation. Both nations must use CBM to rebuild trust and have dialogues to address any issues or disagreements. Both states should keep up their security cooperation in order to maintain peace. The key reason which is responsible for an insurgencies or nationalist movements in their respective states is the missing of development in their provinces that caused discontent among local people. Both states should resolve their complaints and treated equitably. The funded non-state actor would be unable to undermine territorial integrity or sovereignty in this way. Both states must finish their current projects and launch new ones in order to fortify their friendly or economic relations.

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