

Analysing Iran-Pakistan Flux And Its Security Implications For India

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1. Abstract

The paper focuses on the Pakistan-Iran conflict, its past and present. This conflict recently came into the limelight due to the missile exchange between the nations. The paper initially focuses on the relations between Iran and Pakistan per the Islamic Revolution. The paper moves in concentric circles, firstly focusing on the main two countries. Then it explores the origin of the Balochistan Liberation Army. Further, the focus being India, the simmering tension will have impacts on social and economic security, as well as maritime and trade security. The paper also focuses on the geopolitical dimension of India and how India can be instrumental in the liberation of Balochistan. The paper further delves into the aspect of the global powers involved in it like China and the United States. The paper concludes with recommendations for better security in India, and how to protect India from any breaches in security and untoward circumstances.

Keywords - Iran, Pakistan, India's security, Balochistan Liberation Army, Islamic revolution.

2. Introduction

Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, an ally was established in Iran. The warmth of this augmenting relationship was seen as the Shah of Iran became the first head of state to visit Pakistan in 1950. Further having solidified their ties with the signing of a Treaty of Friendship.

Over time there was a drastic change due to divergent political outlooks, the relationships between Iran and Pakistan had deteriorated. The Iranian/ Islamic revolution altered the ideology of Iran. With the overthrowing of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini developed an anti-American stance in Iran, unlike that of Pakistan. Moreover, the emerging Taliban conflict also showed differing opinions, as Pakistan supported the Taliban in Afghanistan. While Iran supported the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. These diverging geopolitical interests moved the two nations apart. Pakistan's close ties to Saudi Arabia and Iran's security agreement with India both played a major role in making the ties further complicated. Furthering the deterioration of these relations was the origination of The Balochistan Liberation Army, in parts of Baloch in both countries. This Army has constantly been attacking military bases of the opposite countries, causing harm.

The situation between the two countries is not just between them but on a larger scale affects their neighbouring countries. India is a major player in Asia and shares a close border with Pakistan. There can be multiple security implications. The refugee influx, economic instability, maritime security problems, and the imminent effects on trade all are interconnected. Although the issue may seem impertinent to India, it can have lasting consequences.



Image Source- [The Indian Express](#)

3. Iran-Pakistan Historical Ties

3.1 Pre-Islamic Revolution

The ties between Iran and Pakistan before the Islamic Revolution were amiable. The CENTO Pact, the Central Treaty Organization, initially known as the Middle East Treaty Organization was formed on 24 February 1955 by Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, a military alliance during the Cold War. There was a proximity between the Pahlavi regime and the government of Pakistan about bilateral issues, showcasing a great deal of trust and friendship. Iran was also instrumental in providing trade to Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965 and 1971. Pakistan had also been a good neighbor and supported Iran during the raw stages of the Iran-Iraq war. The Iran-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement was signed in 1952 and gave preferential treatment for tariffs, and preferred items like textiles, agricultural products, minerals, etc. They were overall showing extremely well-aligned interest.

3.2 Post-Islamic Revolution

The Islamic Revolution led to the end of the historical monarchical rule of the Pahlavi Dynasty and caused the replacement of the Imperial State of Iran by the current-day Islamic Republic of Iran. The monarchical rule of Mohamed Reza Pahlavi was then followed by the theocratic government of, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He was the head of the rebel faction.

Fueled by contrasting ideological bases, originating from their unique Islamisation experiences, the two nations found their political views towards each other increasingly incompatible. Their diffracting outlooks on the Afghan issue were also a point of contention. Iran wanted to check the Taliban rise, to control Sunni extremism. Taliban, majorly comprising Pashtun fighters,

emerged in the initial years of the 1990s with significant support from Pakistan's intelligence agencies. Pakistan along with Saudi Arabia and UAE were primary patrons of the Taliban regime. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, Pakistan supported the Taliban because of the group's potential to "bring order in chaotic Afghanistan and make it a cooperative ally," thus giving Pakistan "greater security on one of the several borders where Pakistani military officers hoped for what they called 'strategic depth.'"¹

During the 1990s, Premier Benazir Bhutto tried to fix the relationship by importing gas from Iran. Still, the political uncertainty within Pakistan and increased levels of sectarian violence did not bring any amiability to the relationship. Further as well, Pakistan's close working relationship with the USA after 11 September 2001(9/11 attacks) and the USA's presence in Afghanistan deteriorated the relationship between the two. The establishment of Imran Khan into power, during the initial days, led to the souring of the relationship between Pakistan and Iran. This was because Pakistan increasingly courted Saudi Arabia.

3.3 Anti-Pro-American Alignment

Pre 1979, the Shah's regime was staunchly supported by the USA, but the new regime under Ayatollah Khomeini adopted an anti-American stance. They had viewed America as a symbol of imperialism, due to their massive influence over the previous regime. The USA along with Britain had organized the 1953 Iranian coup d'état. It was an Iranian army-led movement to overthrow the elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh so that they could strengthen the monarchical rule of the Shah Reza Pahlavi. The USA has significant control over the regime changes in Iran, and to change that Iranian revolution was a catalyst. This marks an anti-American stance of Iran post the revolution.

Furthering the deterioration of ties was done due to the Iran hostage crisis which was a result of the against American stance of Iran. The support of the United States of Saddam Hussien, of Iraq during the Iran and Iraq war, despite Iraq's aggression, was like severing the ties with Iran. From 1979 to mid-1983, at a time when relations with the United States had collapsed, the Iranians maintained diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and purchased Soviet weapons. They even entertained the communist Marxist Tudeh Party at home. This marked a shift in Iran's alliance in the world order.

¹ [9/11 Commission report](#)

4. Balochistan Separatist tendencies

4.1 Origin of Separatist Tendencies

4.1.1 Historical grievances

During the colonial era, the British and Iranian Empires had separated the region of Balochistan, leading to balkanization and geopolitical fragmentation. This drawing of unjust borders divided Baloch tribes and communities, disrupting the historical and social ties of the community.

The Balochistan region is split into three countries: Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Administratively it consists of the Pakistani province of Balochistan, Iranian provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan, and the final part is southern Afghanistan, which includes Nimruz, Helmand, and Kandahar provinces. The people with the same historical roots are separated into minorities in their respective countries.

4.1.2 Economic Marginalization & Political Alienation

The Goldsmith line runs from Afghanistan's Balochistan region to the Arabian Sea. This makes Baloch a treasurer of minerals, natural resources, and a strategic coastline. It accounts for 40% of Pakistan's gas production. They also have the Chabahar port of Iran and Gwadar port of Pakistan in the Balochistan region of these two nations. Showing a rich and abundant supply of resources. Despite the resource wealth, the local Baloch population has felt a lack of equitable treatment. The local communities are impoverished and their decision holds no weightage in big projects and large-scale developments. After the election of President Ahmadinejad in 2005, many Balochs were reported to have been forced from their jobs in a widespread purge of government employees.²

4.1.3 Militant Operations and Human Rights Violation

Pakistan is a foreplayer in causing human rights violations in its Balochistan province, including killings, fake encounters, torture and killing of journalists. These are direct violations of a lot of international laws and conventions, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

² [Interview with Ayyaran, 17 March 2007](#)

Three people were hanged on the 31st of May 2009. That is just three days after an explosion in Zahedan, the provincial capital of Balochistan, Iran. The charges on them were of planning the attack and carrying out the explosion in “Hosseiniye” next to “Amirulmumeneen Mosque”. The following is quoted from BBC’s Persian language service: “Iranian Official News Agency (IRNA) has quoted a judge, saying that the executed were not involved directly in the explosion but they had been arrested two days before the explosion occurred. However, the accused were interrogated and trialed the night between the 30th and 31st of May, and were executed immediately after being charged for facilitating the explosion”³

This super quick trial depicts the arbitrary treatment of the Baloch people. This is against Article 35 which states that in all courts of law, the opposing parties to a dispute have the right to choose an attorney for themselves. If they cannot afford to hire an attorney, they should be provided with the means to do so.⁴

In 2002, out of a total of 14 provincial government secretaries in Quetta, only four were Baloch; of a total of 3,200 students at Balochistan University, fewer than 50 were Baloch; of a total of 180 faculty members, only 30 were Baloch.⁵ This shows how the people of Baloch were marginalized in various spheres.

4.2 Balochistan Liberation Army

4.2.1 Origin and Role of Russia

The original BLA was formed in 1964 as a plan of the Soviet Union to expand its control and they followed communist philosophies. Some say that KGB’s (soviet union) agents, code names Misha and Sasha, had caused the formation of BLA and also its main source of funding. When it was withdrawn, BLA had vanished and resurfaced around the 2000s. The Balochistan Liberation Army currently, was formed in 2000. They had one major motive of creation of a sovereign state of Greater Balochistan. This would include Iranian Pakistan and Afghanistan Balochistan territories. Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri founded the BLA during the 1970s insurgency in Balochistan. Some prominent other founders include Sardar Akbar Khan Bugti and

³ [Balochistan Human rights council](#)

⁴ [Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#)

⁵ [The Revival of Insurgency in Balochistan-Alok Bansal](#)

Mir Balaach Marri. About 6,000 cadres are spread across the Balochistan Province. Most members of this are from the Marri and Bugti tribes. The BLA's commander-in-chief is Bashir Zeb Baloch in the current times.

4.2.2 Current activities on the Pakistan front

Since the inception of the organization, it has been credited for a series of bombings in markets and railways that targeted Pakistani soldiers and police. These attacks were a way to capture the attention of the Pakistani media. They had targeted Pakistani military locations over the years. In 2005, the group attacked Camp Kohlu, where Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf was residing. In 2006, Pakistan had labeled BLA as a terrorist organization. On August 14, 2017, the BLA militants claimed accountability for an IED attack in Harnai, Balochistan. It was directed at members of the Frontier Corps, a paramilitary border force of Pakistan. The Pakistani Army has retaliated in recent times. A tit-for-tat missile firing was being exchanged. Pakistan Air Force launched retaliatory strikes that targeted the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) inside Iran. Pakistan wanted to eliminate the BLA and BLF bases. These were suspected of having militants that caused attacks on their own country. On the 17th of January 2024, the ambassador of Pakistan in Iran returned in protest to the missiles that were launched the previous day by Iran. In the upcoming elections of Pakistan, since the military wanted to show their prowess and that they could be trusted, the country had to retaliate.

4.2.3 Current Activities on the Iran Front

The military strife of the two nations was started by Iran. On the 16th of January, it carried out military strikes that targeted the Jaish al-Adl. It is a militant group in Pakistan. Recently, Iran bombarded the bases of Jaish al-Adl, a Sunni separatist group. This sparked the missile launch from Pakistan. Iran had retaliated against Jaish al-Adl to stop or reduce the cross-border attacks and consolidate its territorial integrity. The country wanted to target the Balochistan Liberation Army bases and reduce the problems caused due to their terror. But this instead ignited some problems in the two countries. The recent airstrikes mark an escalation in the conflict between Pakistan and Baloch separatist groups. This current action did have the potential to open up another conflict in the Middle East, but the Foreign ministers have chosen to have a dialogue exchange their grievances, and solve the matter with word.

5. India's security breach

5.1 Geo-political Dimension

Due to the strategic location of Iran and Pakistan, the security breach can be massive. India shares a major part of Pakistan's border called the Radcliffe line. India does not share a border with Iran, but they have strategic ties and relations that may be affected. The missile conflict not only affects the two countries that were involved in it but also those surrounding it. India in response to the recent attacks had stated that India does understand the actions to be taken by a country as self-defense. Terming the attack of Iran on Pakistan as a defense tactic to protect them against terrorism. "This is a matter between Iran and Pakistan. Insofar as India is concerned, we have an uncompromising position of zero tolerance towards terrorism. We understand actions that countries take in self-defense", said Randhir Jaiswal.⁶



Image Source- [World View by Stratfor](#)

The Prime minister in exile, Naela Quadri of Balochistan, has been requesting India's support against the illegal actions of Pakistan in their Province of Baloch. India had decided to support Balochistan in the United Nations. In response to Pakistan's constant intervention in Kashmir, India had chosen to speak about Balochistan. This showed the incompetence of Pakistan in handling their nation, there was no way could they be trusted with Kashmir. With this issue of Balochistan, it is an added arrow to the quiver of India's foreign policy. Yet the reaction India can expect from Pakistan can be one filled with terrorism. This way of antagonizing Pakistan will drag India into the conflict and cause Pakistan to find ways to retaliate.

Further, we can see India threatening Pakistan regarding actions that it has taken. India's national security advisor, Ajit Doval had threatened Pakistan. "You do one more Mumbai, you lose Balochistan,"⁷ said Doval. He was hinting at Pakistan's involvement in the 2008 Mumbai attacks. This was to ward off thoughts of any terrorist attacks by Pakistan. This issue and the

⁶ [MEA Spokesperson's speech](#)

⁷ [Ajit Doval's speech](#)

request of Balochistan can help India force Pakistan's hand in the Kashmir issue. Since Balochistan is a vital source of Pakistan's economy due to its resources, like natural gas, coal, and minerals, they are keen on keeping it. Balochistan is a home for minerals like gold, copper, zinc, lead, barite, chromite etc. This leverage can be fully utilized by India to keep a check on Pakistan. The reins are in India's hands and it can help shape the Kashmir issue in the way India desires. This dimension of the Balochistan conflict is self-centered yet can benefit India. This entire conflict will lead the Indian government to assess and augment its security preparedness along the shared borders with Pakistan. To be vigilant about any tensions.

5.2 Red Sea Crisis and Trade Security

The Red Sea crisis can be attributed to the Houthi tribe of Yemen. They are Shia and are backed by Iran. This is a cry of Iran against the atrocities committed by Israel against Palestine. The Houthi group uses drones and rockets to target ships that are transporting goods by the strait of Bab al-Mandab, which is a crucial shipping route connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. The Houthis are targeting the Israeli ships. But mainly all the Western ships, since they are not able to differentiate. The Red Sea is an extremely vital waterway for good trade and commerce. But to prevent the bombs and attacks, ships have been diverting and going through a much longer sea route. The sea route through the Cape of Good Hope increases the costs and adds 15-20 days to the journey. The Houthis of Iran have been targeting the ships of Israel but also the USA and Britain. This will in the long term lead to a change in the global supply chain.



Image Source- [Aljazeera](#)

India too has to reroute to protect their cargo from the Houthi tribes. This lack of trade security has led to a shoot-up of prices and caused inflation. The cost of transportation and

freight forwarding has increased by 25 % to 30%.⁸ This has also hurt the agricultural industries due to the increased travel time. In totality, this conflict of the Middle East, between Israel Palestine, Iran Pakistan is interconnected. The Houthis of Iran are also targeting the ships of the USA due to their increased support for Pakistan But the bombardment of the trade routes has caused problems for India. This has led to India facing problems with imports as well as exports.

5.3 Economical & Social Security

The focus on economic and social security becomes a pressing concern due to the immediate proximity of India to Iran and Pakistan.T. This will lead to a shaking up of the economy of South Asia. The trade routes will be affected. Moreover, it will cause a reduction in investment from abroad due to unstable conditions. The economic partnerships may be doubtful of ventures in India due to the proximity. Furthermore, Iran is an important supplier of oil to India. Disruptions in this region could impact oil prices and supply worldwide.

These countries are close neighbors and any problems amongst them can cause problems of energy security in India. This constant potential threat that India faces also causes strain on the resources. The Government diverts their money for defense purposes and not to develop the nation. India will have to cut down on their budget for welfare activities and development and direct it to defense. This will cause reduced development which may not attract foreign direct investment to the country. This can lead to a downfall of the economy.

The social security breach bears a major brunt on the individuals near the borders. Border States like Punjab, Gujarat, and Rajasthan will experience an influx of refugees. In the event of a heightened conflict, it can cause a mass refugee movement. This displaced population that settles down in nearby states will also cause civil unrest among the citizens of India. The increased population puts an undue strain on the resources. More so increased competition in employment will ignite feelings of Xenophobia. The internal unrest will breach the social security of the region. Here we can see how the Iran-Pakistan conflict does not directly involve India but the ripples of the consequences lead to problems of economic and social security in India.

⁸ [The Hindu](#)

5.4 Maritime security

India is strategically located as a prime location for maritime transport. But this also causes a certain sense of fear due to its long coastlines, making it vulnerable. The region of the Indian Ocean extends up to the Western Pacific, Mediterranean, Central, and Southern Indian Ocean. This is crucial and significant in the maritime interest of India. Some strategic ports like the Gwadar Port and Karachi Port have direct entry into the Indian Ocean that can be misused. The Gwadar port in the Balochistan province of Pakistan is owned by the China overseas port holding company. This port is strategic in China's string of pearl's strategy. This is a network of Chinese military facilities in the Indian Ocean region. It ensures China's interests by placing a series of naval bases and commercial ports along significant sea routes. Gwadar is near the Strait of Hormuz, allowing China to enhance its naval presence in the Arabian Sea. Owing to any escalation of conflicts that rope in multiple powers, India will be extremely vulnerable due to the presence of Gwadar Port. China will be able to utilize this port effectively to deploy its ships into the water body in extreme proximity to the peninsula, the Arabian Sea. This port enhances China's presence in the Indian Ocean.

Gwadar is also a key port in the China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) that transports oil and gas from the Middle East to China. Any excessive control exerted by China on this corridor would harm the energy security of India. This establishes increased control of China in the important maritime routes, comprising the Strait of Hormuz. This will make it difficult for India to navigate these waterways. The Chabahar port in Balochistan of Iran manages to counterbalance the Chinese influence. It will secure the lines of energy resources, and secure free lanes for easy navigation. It will enhance India's security through alternate trade routes etc.

6. Global Stakeholder Perspectives

6.1 United States of America

It goes without saying that where there are conflicts between the nations, there are some parts of the conflicts sparked by the United States. The country has a vested interest in both Pakistan and Iran. The USA was the initial point of divergence of ideologies. After the Iranian revolution, Iran had chosen not to align itself with the USA, unlike Pakistan. Further, we can also consider the conflict in Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban that was caused due to the USA. Iran and Pakistan had opposing views on that as well. This play of the USA had just further deepened the dissent of the two countries. The United States has had a track record of causing trouble and fleeing the scene, but the consequences will last a lifetime for the neighboring nations. And the states can poke and probe around the conflict according to the

world order and their will. The USA has managed to keep the fire of conflict between the two. It is important to note that the United States has to maintain cordial relationships with both countries due to their dependence on trade. They need Iran to maintain the Global energy markets, while Pakistan has a strategic location.

6.2 China

China is directly not involved in the conflict, but it will be affected as a country due to the ongoing problems. The conflicts in Balochistan can cause problems for China's Belt and Road initiative. Balochistan provides access to the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Hormuz, which makes this fundamental in the Belt and Road initiative. The Balochi activists outside the Chinese embassy of China in the UK opposed the formation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. This project is funded by China and passes through the area of Baloch. China needs the support of the people there since this corridor can increase the efficiency of trade for them and boost their economy. Already these conflicts have caused the cost of constructing the CPEC to go up. Even the 40-year lease of the Gwadar port by Pakistan to China is seen as a colonizing attempt by the Balochis. Due to these various factors, the Balochis harbor feelings of dissent for China.

7. Recommendations

After thoroughly analyzing the paper and understanding the various aspects of the topic, we can draw certain recommendations for the ongoing crisis, to protect the security of India. The problem needs to be addressed at the roots and the bone of contention, i.e. Baloch area should be dealt with in a better manner -

- A. **Preserve Maritime security**- Currently, India has the Western and the Eastern Naval Commands that are 'Operational Commands', and they exercise control over operations in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. But in the light of the issue of Iran and Pakistan, and the string of pearls strategy of China, India needs to protect itself. India should utilise the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium which was a brainchild of the Indian Navy in 2008 for regional maritime cooperation for the littoral areas in the Indian Ocean region. With Iran and Pakistan both as a part of this symposium, India must address their concerns and have a peaceful dialogue with them. India will take over the Chair of IONS (2025-27) and it is planned to be conducted in India by the end of 2025. Utilising their power as the Chair of this symposium, India should put up the issue of China closing in through the Gwadar port, in Pakistan. India must utilize their stand in this symposium to make the countries aware of the

increasing domination of China in the Indian Ocean region and try to formulate strategies to combat China.

B. Economic Security- We witness the conflict between the two nations, in light of the economic security of India. The main adverse impact would be on the trade of our nation. The Gulf of Oman, is located near Iran and Pakistan offers the only entrance from the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean into the Persian Gulf. If these conflicts escalate it could deter the trade of India with a huge part of the world. To facilitate this India must look at alternative routes. One such route from the Chabhar port in Iran connecting to Central Asia has already been proposed at the G20 conference. But after the pandemic, it is understood that we cannot rely on just one route. Therefore another trade route that goes from the Mumbai port to Muscat port in Oman. Further to prevent the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz area if the crisis increases, India must try to develop a road route from Muscat in Oman to Abu Dhabi. This will give direct access to the Persian Gulf further extending this into Central Asia. So in case of escalated conflicts in Iran and Pakistan, India will still be able to conduct trade. India should keep Iran in the loop as well since they are our close neighbors.

C. International stance- India faces more problems due to its proximity to the two nations in conflict. It was in our best interest to maintain a neutral stance. But with this multi-polar world coming up, India will have to rely on its neighbors. That is why the Neighbourhood First policy was introduced in India. To do justice to this, India must keep Iran in the loop, and maintain cordial relations with them. With the current scenario as we see our close neighbors like Maldives and Pakistan being China's puppets, it would be in our best interest to keep our enemy's enemy close. Iran would also aid India to prevent Houthi attacks. This would help maintain our trade security and we will be able to have a reliable neighbor in times of need.

D. Separatist tendencies in India- Due to the demand for a separate state by the Balochis may cause the rise of certain feelings of dissent amongst communities in India, like in Kashmir. To prevent any problems in areas in India integration of the same seems to be the most viable option. Development of Track II levels of diplomacy through civil societies and NGOs which foster cultural exchange programs and events to allow for integration. To prevent dissent India can also channel more funds to the development of areas where they see rising separatist tendencies. This way the people there will be content with their government. Further, even open dialogue of the people with the state will help the government understand the concerns that are being raised.

8. Conclusion

The paper has extensively delved into the topic and analyzed various aspects of the issue. Beginning from the Balochistan Liberation Army that had caused multitudes of upheavals in the two nations, to how India can face a breach of security and must remain vigilant of the flux. The conflict between Iran and Pakistan can be traced back to the Balochistan Liberation Army. The grievances and problems that led to the inception of the Balochistan liberation army were myriads. The historical, economic, social, and political grievances just amplified their demand for a separate homeland. In all walks of life, the Baloch people had faced issues that sparked them to attack the military bases of the countries of Iran and Pakistan. Often these attacks were misunderstood by the nations. In this, the researcher has also spoken about the implications on the security of India, that can be breached. The security concerns were explained, highlighting the potential vulnerabilities in geopolitical, trade, maritime, and socio-economic domains. Moving on to the recommendations, which are to target the challenges faced by the Baloch people, to even the security problems of India. This paper serves as a holistic study of the Iran-Pakistan crisis, underlining the need for India to navigate forward strategically and effectively.

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