

REPORT



Islamabad Policy Institute

Supporting Dialogue for Peace & Development

Pakistan-Iran Peace & Security Cooperation

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Roundtable Report

Pakistan-Iran Peace & Security Cooperation



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INTRODUCTION

The Middle East region is witnessing intense volatility in the wake of US airstrikes assassinating a serving Iranian commander Gen Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad. Given considerable geo-strategic importance of the region for global peace and order, it is exceedingly significant for Pakistan to play a constructive role in forging close ties with regional states. Maintaining deep ties with Iran that is both a major actor in the regional politics and friendly Islamic neighbour of Pakistan is highly pivotal for ensuring national interest.

Pakistan's has been a longstanding friend of Iran. Pakistan was one of the first states in the world to recognize the Islamic Revolution of Iran by sending its then Foreign Minister Agha Shahi, who took an immediate visit to Tehran and met his Iranian counterpart Karim Sanjabi there in 1979. As Iran celebrates 41st anniversary of the revolution, Islamabad will expectedly continue to consolidate bilateral trust and confidence.

Despite, the generally positive outlook of the relationship, it has, however, seen its ups and downs over the past few decades. Pakistan has supported Iranian position on its nuclear program and its deal with P5+1, more commonly known as the Joint Comprehensive

Plan of Action (JCPOA). More lately, it has advocated that all parties adhere to the commitments under JCPOA and keep the agreement intact. Similarly, Pakistan stayed out of the coalition that took part in Yemen War and has time and again offered to mediate for defusing the tensions in the Persian Gulf. The other high point in the relationship has been the cooperation for border security. These developments are welcome and may provide the much-needed impetus to forge ahead with cooperation especially in areas like bilateral trade, banking channels, and energy-related projects.

KEY POINTS OF PRESENTATIONS

Prof. Sajjad Bokhari

Executive Director Islamabad Policy Institute

- There are two events that form the backdrop of today's discussion. The first is the evolving situation in the region after the assassination of Gen Qassem Soleimani in Iraq by the United States and secondly Iran celebrating the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.
- The discussion would focus on the prospects of Pakistan-Iran Peace and Security Cooperation.
- Instability is the new normal the world over, but more specifically in the neighbourhood in which Pakistan and Iran are located. This growing disorder is shaping how various governments view peace and stability. The governments may differ in approaches, but all agree that it is time to restore calm. It is in the interest of both Pakistan and Iran to collaborate for an end to the conflict around us.
- Pakistan and Iran have a strong relationship based on historical, cultural, linguistic, religious and civilizational linkages. Their ties have, however, undergone a major transformation over the past 72 years. Most of these changes were influenced by regional and the geo-political environment. It is, however, a testament to the resilience and strength of Pak-Iran bilateral relations that the



two countries, despite being on the opposite sides of the geo-political divide since 1980s, have maintained cooperative ties and in a number of instances supported each other on issues of importance to them.

- There are numerous examples over the past decade wherein the two countries cooperated to deal with critical challenges. Pakistan decided against joining the coalition that fought the Yemen war and has on at least couple of occasions over the past three years attempted to defuse tensions in the Persian Gulf. Similarly, Iran took a clear stand in support of the Kashmiris struggle for the right of self-determination and rejected the annexation of the Occupied Valley through the annulment of Article 370.
- Even more remarkable was the way in which the two sides worked together to address border security issues and prevented terrorism incidents on either sides of the border from turning into a major source of friction between them.

- These instances provide hope in the midst of some other not so encouraging examples like failure to increase bilateral trade, open banking channels, start ferry service between the two countries and undertake energy projects.
- Pakistan and Iran have much to gain through the expansion of ties, and an earnest effort in that direction is possible, provided the will is there.
- One possible avenue could be a regional security arrangement that could bring together all regional players and under which they could work together to address their security concerns. For this to happen strategic convergence and trust would have to be developed.

**H.E. Ambassador Seyyed
Mohammad Ali Hosseini**
Ambassador of Islamic Republic of
Iran to Pakistan



- Today, we are celebrating 41st anniversary of the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution under sagacious leadership of Hazrat Imam Khomeini (R.S) the architect of the Islamic Revolution in the present era.
- Islamic Revolution of Iran under leadership of Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini (R.A) is a rare occurrence which shines and glitters on zenith of Islamic history.
- Islamic Revolution overturned race and class based systems and became harbinger of equality, human solidarity and protection of human dignity and justice for all without distinction and superiority.
- Due to its anti-imperialistic nature, animosity towards oppression and support for nations oppressed by imperialistic powers, the Islamic revolution in Iran has attracted the

attention of a number of enthusiasts from the deprived and the oppressed segments of the world and played a vital role in awakening of the Islamic Ummah. It has contributed to the reawakening in the Islamic world and strengthening of the spirit of freedom and independence among the Muslims across the world.

- Our region recently witnessed one of the brutal acts of terrorism at the hands of the United States, which martyred Gen Qasim Soleimani. We lost the most prominent and the most effective anti-terrorism commander of the world. Gen Soleimani, who was brave, wise, courteous and visionary, fought for the sake of keeping the people of this region safe from the wickedness of cruel and ruthless terrorist groups and making the world a safer place to live.
- Therefore, by assassinating Gen Soleimani, US not only undermined the national sovereignty of Iraq and executed an attack against Iran, it practically targeted one of the pillars providing security in the region that faced various terrorist groups from Al-Qaida to ISIS and Al-Nusra front. His martyrdom is being mourned by the people of Iran and all those who seek independence from imperialism in the region.
- In this incident, US has once again proven that not only had it the slightest respect and care for human and ethical values, but also it had no obligation to legal and international rules and laws.
- The same forces pursuing unethical and anti-cultural approaches brazenly threatened to

attack cultural heritage of Iran, which is the joint cultural and civilization heritage of humanity.

- Iran and Pakistan are passing through an important time of their bilateral relationship.
- Many pundits are of the view that future of political power belongs to Asia. Iran and Pakistan would be the most important strategic members of the future world. The wider our relations and the more active our role, the more effective and efficient part we can play together in shaping the future equations.
- Iran and Pakistan are successfully cooperating at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. The two have commonality of views on most of international and regional issues. Both the countries believe that external interference in the region and designs of foreign forces and their aggressive and occupational posture deprived the people of their inherent rights and have been the source of many disasters in this part of the world.
- Islamic Republic of Iran attaches high value to its ties with Pakistan, the neighbor and the good ally in happy and sad moments.
- If countries of West Asia do not remove misconceptions and develop convergence, synergy and joint cooperation, they would open the way for more oppressive interventions by foreign unilateralists and hegemonic powers of trans-region. This would bring threats, destruction, and more

plundering of the wealth and interests of people of the region.

- Misperceptions and miscalculations between countries of this region are major issues that have and will continue to deeply effect regional equations. This cognitive impairment and miscalculations are also behind the current crisis in the region.
- Unfortunately this cognitive impairment and miscalculations are not limited to the USA, but some of its regional allies and associates also suffer from these problems due to their submissive and unconditional dependence on and alliance with US. Therefore, they too have adopted the same wrong and disastrous path, which has led to cracks and conflicts and whose destructive and adverse effects can be seen today more than ever.
- Even more regrettably, these cracks and regional conflicts have provided a breathing atmosphere for miscreant and rebel forces inside and outside of the region. These elements expand their illegitimate and illegal military presence in the region by exploiting these conditions and creating false threats and artificial insecurities. The most important manifestation of this is the endless agony and suffering borne by the oppressed people of the region from Afghanistan to Iraq, and from Syria to Yemen and Libya.
- Another reason of for the world powers to pursue these destructive and inflammatory policies is the urge to sell ruinous weapons worth billions of dollars in the region.
- Descriptions and deficiencies, we witness today in the region ranging from lack of

dialogue to absence of structural interactions are clear signs that the regional circumstances are not improving.

- The Persian Gulf region and along it the Gulf of Oman area has economic, political and strategic importance. The unique characteristic of this region and its place in global economic and security architecture has earned it the description of heartland by some analysts.
- What the region needs more than ever is an across the board and comprehensive dialogue. Iran has been pursuing this proposal for years under the frame work of the UN. The plan, known as Hormuz Peace Endeavour today is an initiative of the Honorable President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. HOPE, “Hormuz Peace Endeavor” is a plan for regional cooperation and for establishment of durable and long term peace throughout the region.
- The objective of this plan is to maintain security in the Persian Gulf, Oman Sea and Strait of Hormuz with the participation of all regional countries and without involvement of the foreign forces. The foreigners, through their involvement in maritime security, oil and energy, and presence in regional waterways, have brought nothing except insecurity, instability, more corruption and plunder.
- The initiative, moreover, aims to promote peace, stability, development, welfare of the inhabitants of the region, maritime security, trade, economy, cultural and social relations, mutual understanding, friendly ties and cooperation among the nations while addressing their differences for establishing

collective security mechanism covering all the countries in the region.

- Hormuz Peace Plan also aims at to counter all types of sectarian strife, extinguish unrest and current conflicts in peaceful manners and through dialogue, develop cooperation against terrorism and extremism, ensure respect for sovereignty of the countries and their integrity, contain threats and violence and guarantee non-interference in internal affairs of other countries.
- This initiative, in view of the realities in the region and a definite belief in a new and inclusive architecture, is not only possible rather it is the most required imperative, to be pursued by all in the region.
- Tehran will likewise remain supportive of peace and security and regional development. Islamic Republic of Iran wants solutions and all the regional countries should contribute to peaceful and diplomatic solutions of the conflicts and problems in the region.
- Clear steps in this direction by all are necessary and Pakistan’s role in this regard will be very important, we believe in security for all.
- The countries around the Strait of Hormuz have on the basis of delusion of buying security and development from outside achieved nothing except war and chaos in our region and in the world.
- We should instead opt for and subscribe to paradigm of regional inclusivity and synergy- as the only realistic way out of the current

cycle of crises- so that we can proceed towards a thriving, prosperous future with promising prospects for future generations.

The ambassador made the following points during the Q&A session:

- Iran would never allow a third country to affect its ties with Pakistan. Iran is by no means protecting Indian interests.
- Border security issues can be addressed through cooperation and the security forces are already having good cooperation in that regard. Border security has greatly improved. Pakistan and Iran plan to exchange delegations for further discussion on the issue.
- Iran is ready to participate in CPEC in any format – bilateral or trilateral – that Pakistan may desire. Tehran has already conveyed its readiness to Islamabad in this regard.
- Ways have to be found to bypass the US sanctions to promote bilateral trade and economic cooperation.
- Pakistan is playing a positive role for peace in Afghanistan.
- Iran sees the Government in Afghanistan as the axis of dialogue. Peace in Afghanistan is possible only through participation in the dialogue of all parties to the conflict.
- Iran has welcomed Pakistan's initiatives for peace in the Persian Gulf. Iran is ready to participate in any dialogue whether it's held in Tehran, Islamabad or Riyadh for resolving

the outstanding issues. However, there has been no positive response from the other side.

- Pakistan has so far resisted all pressures to give up its neutrality in the Middle East.
- Iran did not encourage anyone to travel to Syria for defending the shrine of Syeda Zainab (AS). People, however, have special love and reverence for the family of the Holy Prophet (SAAW). Iran contributed to the defense of the Holy Shrine irrespective of anyone helping. Iran had enough human resource to defend the Shrine without the support from other countries.
- Trump's Deal of the Century is a sinister design to destroy the Middle East.

Conclusion

Forging close bilateral ties and cementing trust through confidence building measures is the need of the hour for both Islamabad and Tehran.

Pakistan owing to its non-aligned role in regional conflicts is better placed to play a constructive role in de-escalating the rising tensions in the region.

A renewed push for ‘paradigm of regional inclusivity and synergy’ can bring an end to the vicious cycle of mistrust and animosity.

The Gulf States’ heavy dependence on foreign powers for defence and security, along with pouring in of lethal western weapons worth billions of dollars, has shrunk the prospects of regional dialogues and given birth to mistrust and fear making the entire region insecure.

The implementation of Iran’s proposed peace plan “Hormuz Peace Endeavor” could be an encouraging step towards achieving regional peace, security and cooperation. The plan is well timed and has vast potential to yield desirous outcomes, if implemented in both letter and spirit.

The absence of regional dialogues has provided an opportunity to destabilizing forces in the region as witnessed in

connection with the Afghan Peace Process (APP). The successful completion of APP is a prerequisite for lasting peace and security not only in Pakistan, but across the neighbourhood. Likewise, the prolonged and unending chaos in the Middle East is also due to minimum cooperation between the regional states.

US belligerence and virtually complete disregard for international norms and laws is a worrisome situation that undermines the prospects of regional peace and order. The killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani was a severe blow to the efforts for eradicating ISIS and other extremist groups from the region.

Therefore, Pakistan must contribute to realization of the goals of HOPE. This would keep maritime passages secure and ensure energy security, the two major worries for Pakistan policy makers.

It would also help address Pakistan’s genuine concerns about sectarianism and terrorism within its boundaries. The initiative is a cause of hope in the otherwise murky environment.

It is an opportune time for Muslim states to come forward and join hands to confront imperialist forces and their policies sowing the seeds of discord in the Muslim world. This can also prove to be a stepping stone towards solving the longstanding Palestine and Kashmir conflicts.