

Balochistan; Gate Way of Emerging Relations between Iran and Central Asia: An Overview

Social Sciences and Humanities

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Abstract

In the ever-changing dynamics of international affairs, Iran with considerable reserves of gas and oil and with a significant geography has been playing a vital geostrategic and geo economic role. Arguably, its importance in the world politics would gain fillip given in the post-nuclear deal period. Iran has had quite amicable relations with all Central Asia states since the 1990s primarily due to common religion, history, culture and heritage while using territory of Balochistan as gateway. Now the stage is set for the Islamic republic to boost up its economic, political, and cultural and defence relations with the energy rich Central Asian states through Balochistan. In this context, this article is an attempt to evaluate the historical aspect of Iranian relations with the region. An attempt is also made to analyse the existing potentialities of stronger bilateral ties in all fields. Moreover, this piece also provides a bird's eye view of the convergences and divergences of Iran and the US in the region as the latter is also a significant player in the region.

Key Words: Iran, Central Asian States, Economic Relations, Potentialities, Convergences and Divergences, US Interests, Future Prospects.

Introduction

Iran has established harmonious connections with Central Asia, and it shares regional and sea outskirts with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Iran prompted to cultivate relations with the Central Asia soon after their independence after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The freedom of Central Asian states was invited with fear in Tehran (Cornell, Svante E: 2004). Wishing to exploit its

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verifiable association with this area and the vacuum created by the Soviet breakdown, Iran at first went for building a locale wide Islamic coalition of expresses that could go about as a vital shield, shielding Iran from outside particularly U.S. infringement or circle. Iranian geology was such that it practically manages Central Asian access to the Persian Gulf and the high oceans. This design offers numerous Central Asian states a method for breaking their reliance on routes through Russian region (Cordesman, Anthony H: 2013).

Balochistan: The gateway to the Central Asian Republics for Iran

The province of Balochistan is unique in its geo-political significance. It forms 44% of Pakistan's land mass and has a 770 km long coast line. Economically, its vast rangelands, large numbers of livestock, rich mineral and gas deposits, and good quality deciduous fruits are of significant value. Balochistan has been the focus of massive infrastructural projects. Iran and Pakistan were to have developed competing port, rail, and highway networks, hoping to funnel the trade of Central Asia through their own national territories which remained incomplete for many other reasons. Pakistan has now turned to China and new project named CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) be introduced. Pak China Economic Corridor is a framework of regional connectivity.

CPEC will not only benefit China and Pakistan but will have positive impact on Iran, Afghanistan, India, Central Asian Republic, and the region. The enhancement of geographical linkages having improved road, rail and air transportation system with frequent and free exchanges of growth and people to people contact and activity of higher volume of flow of trade and businesses. Gwadar is a port city on the southwestern coast of Balochistan and it offers huge economic opportunities not only to Pakistan but to others too i.e., the Central Asian Republics, Middle East, South Asia and the Gulf States. By the very virtue of this strategic geographical location, it creates a conflict of interests between nations deeply influenced by its development. Gwadar provides the shortest possible access for Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean and is the most cost effective.

Central Asia: A Region of Strategic Importance to Iran

Iran's reasonable logic results from its novel geo-vital area, a variable that additionally clarifies the need given to the development of its local relationships (Maleki: 2007). In this way, given Iran's excellent topographical area and geostrategic imperativeness for world energy, a necessary part of Teheran's Central Asian strategy has concentrated on pipeline issues, more

particularly on the advancement and development of an incomprehensible pipeline system for oil and gas to connect the landlocked countries of Central Asia to worldwide markets (Kavalski, Emilian). Economic variables are, in any case, getting to be more ideal to Iran. The most essential purpose behind this is Iran's topographical area, which has made it a common connection between Central Asia and worldwide markets. This has been reflected in numerous travel and transportation understandings between Iran and CA states (Peimani, Hooman: 1998). A large portion of the Iran's neighbors are the home for United States army installations. The occasions of 11 September, 2001, and the consequent USA attacks in Afghanistan and presence in the states of Central Asian brought about an extra decay of Iran's security surroundings (Blank, S).

Iran's Interests in Central Asia

Iran has critical financial diversions in southwestern region, in spite of the fact that its general energy is restricted and its key investment lie generally in the Gulf area and Levant. Iranian topography manages Central Asian accessed to the Persian Gulf, and Iran has been an imperative travel route for provincial merchandise, for example, Uzbek cotton (Cordesman, Anthony H: 28). Tehran's investments in Central Asian region are predominantly to protect solidness, to reinforce monetary collaboration and to rise as a major territorial force (Mesbahi, Mohiaddin: 2004). Iran expects to create relations with Central Asia so as to guarantee its security, political, monetary investments and has not instigated the savage topple of the locale's mainstream administrations (Kavalski, Emilian).

Relations between Iran and Kyrgyzstan

Relations between Iran and Kyrgyzstan initially remained at more modest level than in other cases. Diplomatic relations were established in May 1992 and Kyrgyz embassy in Tehran was opened in mid-1996. Relations between the two countries has significantly expanded since 1994 (Menashri, David: 2010). Two-sided relations between Iran and Kyrgyzstan were pretty much even and to a degree loose. The two nations consented to treaty on collaboration in the circles of transport, traditions, financial and trade relations. Two nations connect in the circles of culture, education, travel, accounts, traditions, war on trafficking and wrongdoing as a rule. They offer one another mechanical and farming merchandise alternate and the need of Iranian corporations took part in development of a thruway uniting Bishkek and Osh. Both states were relatively isolated both geographically and diplomatically. Iranian-Kyrgyz relations are agreeable, despite the fact that

they has restricted effect on the indispensable general interests of whichever country. Not Iran or Kyrgyzstan calculates vigorously in the other's external strategy calculus. The concentrate in the between Kyrgyz and Iranian authorities are on enhancing two-sided trade, which the foreign minister of kyrgyzstan declared may rapidly touch \$1 billion (Ahmadinejad calls for fresh global economic order). A great part of the Iran-Kyrgyzstan affiliation is restricted to this sort of benevolent however deliberately insignificant diplomacy.

Relations between Iran and Kazakhstan

Diplomatic relationships between Kazakhstan and Iran were started on January 29, 1999. Embassy of Kazakhstan in the Iran was opened in 1993. Embassy of the Iran in the Kazakhstan was opened in 1992 (Kazakhstan-Iran relations). Iran and Kazakhstan have cordial and neighborly relations. Both states have common state interests in ranges such as, transportation, combating terrorism, energy, drug trafficking, and farming (Ahmadinejad Sees Brighter Future for Iran Kazakh Ties). More than 60 interstate, intergovernmental, interdepartmental agreements and documents are signed between states. As the sphere's top maker of uranium, Kazakhstan has an exposed enthusiasm for extending its business market for common atomic energy, and would most likely be willing to offer uranium to Iran if universal approvals were fallen (Peyrouse, Sébastien; 2012).

Tehran views Kazakhstan as a nation with agrarian, an extensive industrial, and scientific potential. It imports from Kazakhstan, metals, grain, and oil items. Kazakhstan in its chance is keen on headway of financial and trade collaboration and political dialog with Iran. The respective trade between the two nations has developed to \$2 billion over the late years. In trade, Kazakhstan imports Iranian nourishment items (Kazakh-Iran economic and trade cooperation to ease tension in the region). The two nations are presently accomplices in joint gas and oil tasks including development of a pipeline joining Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran, which would provide Astana admission to the Asian marketplaces. There is strain, be that as it may, between the two states on the matter of the position of the Caspian Maritime. Both have an offer of the seabed's assets and both benefits from the inconceivable oil saves there (Fitzgerald, Erin and Vira, Varun.: 2011).

Relations between Iran and Uzbekistan

The Islamic Republic of Iran created discretionary relations with the Republic of Uzbekistan on 10 May, 1992, commonly helpful and agreeable relations reinforced (Fard, Ali Sardani; 2014). They were creating relations on the standards of shared regard and profit to the memorable and social ties

between the two nations. The two nations has so far marked almost 50 intergovernmental and interagency concessions to collaboration in the fields of trade, transport, Industry and economy, which focused the headings of association (Jafarova, Aynur; 2014).

Iran-Uzbekistan relations has establishes in the social and recorded ties between the two nations. Uzbekistan is Central Asia's most crowded nation, given that relations has not generally been smooth between the two nations. Uzbekistan's support of U.S. activities at containing Iran, its obvious eagerness to collaborate with the United States in security matters, and its interfering in the issues of Tajikistan has all helped a hazardous relationship between the two nations (Mesbahi; 2004). Anyway the Uzbek-American association has lost a lot of its substance particularly after 2005, when the Uzbek government asked America to withdraw its troops from the nation. From that point forward, the relations between Uzbekistan and Iran have been enhancing bit by bit (Kavalski, Emilian).

Financial relations between Iran and Uzbekistan are situated chiefly at the utilization of Iran as a travel point for Uzbek trades. As a landlocked nation, Uzbekistan has become subject to ports of Iran to encourage the transport of its cotton, which is the nation's second-positioned export item (Cordesman, Anthony H). Iran provides Uzbekistan a smaller route to the Persian Gulf locale over Iran's ports of Bandar-Abbas, and Chabahar on the Indian Ocean coastline. Iran in its chance is allowed to exports its products to Central Asia and the Commonwealth through Uzbekistan (Iran-Uzbekistan cultural ties good ground for cooperation). Trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Iran exceeded US\$350 million in 2013 and are planning to increase trade turnover up to US\$1 billion (Trade turnover of Uzbekistan and Iran exceeds US\$350m in 2013). Iran is Uzbekistan's sixth largest trading partner (Daly, John C. K: 2008).

Relation between Iran and Tajikistan

Iranian and Tajikistan ties are a natural continuation of common history between the two nations. At the point when Tajikistan announced its autonomy in 1991, Iran was the first nation to start political relations with Tajikistan on 9 September, 1991 (Elik, Suleyman). The Iranian government office in Dushanbe was started in January 1992, and Tajikistan started its Embassy in Tehran in July 1995 (Jani, Feruza: 2009). Among the recently autonomous conditions of Central Asia, Tajikistan possessed an uncommon spot for Iran. They are nearly connected by many strings of joint history and society, literature and solidarity of language (Rubenstein, A and Smolansky, O.; 2004). Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2006, portrayed the

association in the middle of Iran and Tajikistan as likened to one spirit in two bodies (Fitzgerald, Erin and Vira, Varun).

The legal base of bilateral cooperation has established a strong foundation for strengthening and developing relations in various spheres. About 150 important Memorandums of Understandings, intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements were signed over the past period in the areas of trade, economy, Industry, energy, , investment, culture, transport, gas and oil etc (Trade and economic relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran: 2014). Iran helped essentially to Tajik base improvement, highways contributing in railways, and hydroelectric tasks about the nation. The Sangtuda-2 hydro-electric plant beside the Vakhsh Waterway, which started in 2011, was funded with some \$180 million in Iranian reserves (Akhuonova, Laleh Yunus: 2011). Iran additionally funded over a large portion of the development charges for Tajikistan's \$40 million Anzab tunnel (Cristiani, Dario: 2010). Numerous private Iranian corporations are active in Tajikistan, constricting with the Tajik Ministry of Energy in 2011, to assemble a concrete plant and a coal force plant for an aggregate expense of \$500 million (Sodiqov, Alexander; 2011).

Relations between Iran and Turkmenistan

Subsequently the failure of the Soviet Union, the Islamic Republic of Iran was the first country to recognize Turkmenistan's independence on 27 October 1991 (Atai, Farhad and Zizi, Hamidreza : 2012) and both states signed a preliminary protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations in February 1992 (Anceschi, Luca: 2009). Turkmenistan is the only republic in Central Asia which has both maritime and land borders with Iran, its position as a gateway for Iran to Central Asia. Iran and Turkmenistan have marked in excess of 160 two-sided documents on collaboration previously, and that there have been huge accomplishment in fortifying financial participation, including participation in the energy, gas and oil industry, and the travel of electricity in the zone of transport and industry (Ambassador: Iran-Turkmenistan Relations 'Exemplary: 2010). The Iran-Turkmenistan trade turnover reached some \$5 billion in 2013 and the two states plan to boost trade turnover by 100 percent reaching \$10 billion (Iran, Turkmenistan agree to expand transport cooperation: 2014).

Turkmenistan has broad hydrocarbon saves, energy figures broadly into both reciprocal financial collaborations. For sure, Iran's relations with Turkmenistan were developing in the zone of petroleum exports. In 2006, Turkmenistan gave 282.5 billion cubic feet of gas to Iran, and in July 2009, Ashgabat and Tehran consented to grow Turkmenistan's yearly volume of gas

transfers to Iran to around 1.4 bcf every day from a past contractual volume of 800 million cubic feet (mmcf) every day (Adibi, Siamak: 2010). The increment would be transported by means of another pipeline from the Davletabad field to Iran, however the field had a while ago been held solely for conveyances to Russia. The neighbors introduced the Davletabad-sarakhs-khangiran pipeline in 2010 (Fitzgerald, Erin and Vira, Varun).

Iran and U.S. rivalry toward Central Asia

After the breakdown of the USSR, the United States and other western ally voiced solid worry that Iran would look to seek after a subversive and adventurist approach to fare its image of Islamic government to Central Asia and the Caucasus (Cornell, Svante E). American desired to control and dominated in the Caspian region, as part of the US global efforts to surround and isolate Iran (Yuldasheva, Guli: 2008). Central Asia is an alternate range, where Tehran was trying to extend its provincial impact, while U.S. is looking to block Iranian suggestions to the previous Soviet republics. Central Asia was one of the minimum coordinated area on the planet, notwithstanding, American-Iranian rivalry is molded as much by their individual relations with each of the states as by territorial contemplations (Fitzgerald, Erin and Vira, Varun). United States also supported to Turkey for countering Iranian influence in this region.

The foundation of the American military vicinity in Central Asian region and Afghanistan after 11 September, 2001, straightforwardly tested Iran's security and agonized over the aftereffects of U.S. vicinity on its doorstep (Cornell, Svante E). United States interests in the area by encompassing Iran with US companions and partners, in spite of the fact that Iran likewise has picked up from the American-drove annihilation of the Taliban and alliance actions in Iraq. Iran sees the American sponsored Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan channel and its territorial security vicinity as a feature of United States endeavors to make Central Asia a piece of a hostile to Iranian coalition. Amid the 1990s, Russia and Iran had comparative investments in holding their impact in the Caspian area by blocking the development of United States furthermore Western impact. They likewise restricted the United States consolation of Turkey's part in this area. They utilized the matter of the position of the Caspian Maritime to thwart Western oil improvement endeavors (Nichol, Jim: 2010).

Conclusion

Both Iran and the Central Asia states are potentially endowed with vast reserves of energy resources. Due to its strategically vital location, Iran has maintained amicable economic relations with the CARs. Presumably, mutual trade is very likely to double if the ongoing Iran nuclear deal succeeds.

However, Iran is somehow apprehensive that Central Asia states could well outclass it in the near future given their burgeoning oil, gas and coal deposits. Arguably, such a stumbling block would be less obstructive because Iran quite enjoys historical, cultural and religious affinities with the region. Central Asia is a region of vital importance for Iran on many fronts, Iran can exports its finished goods to the region, and it can also work with some regional countries aimed at clamping down upon disruptive terrorism and militancy. For Central Asia states, Iran would be an inexpensive and easily accessible seaport so as to export and import goods because Gwadar seaport is mired with some sorts of problems such as insurgency in deteriorating law and order in Balochistan whereas Balochistan can play dynamic role in the relations with Iran and central Asian Republics if law and order situation can be maintained and Government of Pakistan focused on rights of indigenous Baloch people and equal distribution of wealth. Moreover, if the Iran nuclear accord succeed, it will create convergence of interests between the US and Iran in the Central Asia region. If the same deal instigates no fruitful results, it is highly likely that both the countries would remain at odds and loggerheads calculated to maximize their very national interests.

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