

The Iranian Nuclear Deal and Its Impacts on Balochistan

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyze the impacts of Iranian Nuclear deal on the province of Balochistan in Pakistan. The Iranian nuclear crisis is one of the most significant issues facing the international community for the past decade. Balochistan is going through a difficult phase and it's in the grip of both political and economic problems. The discourse portrays a positive impact of Iranian nuclear deal on Balochistan with far reaching implications. The nuclear deal presents an historic opportunity for Iran and Pakistan to redefine their economic links and usher a new era of development. Secondary resources have been mostly used for the conduct of the study.

Keywords

Conflict Development Poverty Sanctions Strategic Revolution Trade

INTRODUCTION

Iran is at the cross-roads of the Middle East and it has a great civilization. It has huge reserves of oil and gas and a country of great geographic and strategic importance. Sandra Mackey in the book „The Iranians“, puts the historical perspective about Iran as follows:-

“For two hundred years that spanned the Ottoman Empire to the Cold war, Iran’s geographic location and natural resources made it a pawn of great political rivalries. Though much of nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, imperial Britain and Czarist Russia maneuvered Iran in the Strategic contest for empire, warm-water ports and the black gold of petroleum....”. In the 1970’s Iran was playing the role of „regional Policeman“ for American interests but when the 1979 revolution took place, there was a complete reversal of policy and US was declared by Iran as a „great Satan”.

Iran’s relations with Pakistan had their ups and downs throughout history. Iran was one of the first countries to recognize Pakistan after her independence in 1947. During the reign of Muhammad Reza Pehalvi, Pakistan’s relations with Iran were relatively sincere and co-operative. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 and Ayatullah Khomeini’s eagerness to export revolution to neighboring countries alarmed the Gulf countries and Pakistan. The Gulf countries formed the Gulf Cooperation council in 1981 and supported Saddam Hussein. General Zia ulHaq had its own brand of Islamic thought and politics and under the tacit influence of Saudis disapproved the Iran Revolution.

The successful nuclear deal between Iran and P5+1 (five permanent members of UN and Gemrany) will have a major impact on Balochistan politically and economically. As the largest province of Pakistan in area it shares more than 900 km of desolate border with Siestan-Balochistan province of Iran. But for most of its 207,000 square miles, Baluchistan alternates abruptly between stark mountains and arid expanses of semi desert

Wasteland (Harrison, p-7). The ethnic Balochs are settled on both sides of the border. The harsh climate with its biting winter and scorching summer heat makes it difficult to pursue a permanent occupation in the border areas. In the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's due to the easing of border restrictions on trade between Iran and Pakistan, the illegal trade of goods flourished in the bordering areas. It provided the poverty stricken people with a sense of livelihood even though it was illicit trade.

The attacks in Iran by Jundullah (a Sunni Group) forced Tehran to close the border with Pakistan. Since then the trade between the two countries has dwindled, although the illegal sale of Iranian oil continues in the province. The illegal sale of Iranian oil has affected Pakistan's economy but that is the only source of income for many people in the long stretches of land in Balochistan. Iran has begun to build a border fence to put a halt to the smuggled goods. While the increased tension between Iranian border guards and bordering people has also exacerbated the relations between the two countries. Deadly attacks near the Pakistan-Iran border take place frequently. Iranian officials claim smugglers and Sunni militants often flee towards Pakistan after carrying out deadly attacks on Iranian border guards (Baloch, 2014)

The decline of trade between Iran and Pakistan has badly affected the province of Balochistan. Iran has vast amount of natural resources and Pakistan is facing acute energy shortage, therefore the decline in trade is unfathomable. Pakistan's trade with Iran worth \$1.3 billion in the financial year 2008-2009, plummeted to \$ 217 million dollars in the 2013-2014 financial year (Hourel, 2015). The scattered population of Balochistan and the appalling poverty of the people would have benefited most from the trade. But the economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States and European Union made it difficult to trade with Iran. The successful nuclear

deal between Iran and P5+1 has improved the prospects of Iran coming out of isolation and increased trade with Iran. Most of the countries of the world including India and European Union are queuing up for trade with Iran. It is an historic opportunity for Pakistan to restore trade links with Iran.

Iran Pakistan pipeline was postponed due to the sanctions imposed on Iran, the US forced countries not to engage in any economic activity with Iran due to its nuclear program. Launched in 2010, the project envisages the creation of 1,800 kilometer pipeline from Iran to Pakistan (Dawn, 2015). Iran has fulfilled its side of the bargain and has completed the pipeline to the country's border. However, due to the scarcity of funds and American insistence on not trading with Iran, Pakistan couldn't complete its part of the gas pipeline. Pakistan's interest in the lifting of United Nations sanctions on Tehran most immediately pertains to long-stalled efforts to operate a gas-pipeline into Iran's southern energy fields (Hudson, 2015). The successful nuclear deal will ensure that the gas pipeline will be completed in the near future. In a meeting with Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, Nawaz Sharif in 2014 vowed to work on Pakistan's side of the \$7.5 billion Gas Pipeline (Newsweek May 24-31, 2014). The gas pipeline when completed will traverse through the province of Balochistan in Pakistan.

There is acute shortage of electricity in Pakistan which has crippled its economy. Balochistan with its vast expanse of land and scattered population finds it hard to get electricity in the remote areas. However, Iran is providing electricity to the bordering areas of Balochistan on a small scale which could be expanded to other areas. According to Siddique Baloch, Iran is ready to sell 10,000 MW electricity to Balochistan from its Grid systems of Zahedan and Mekran (Siddique Baloch- p 52). The present Government in Balochistan could seek authority from the Federal Government for getting

additional electricity from Iran. Iran currently exports around 100 mega watts (MW) of electricity to the areas of Pakistan that border Iran. (Hourelid, 2015).

According to DAWN Sunday Sept 6, 2015, quoting Boolmberg News Service Iran is home to world's fourth largest oil reserves and it is likely to increase its production by as much as 800,000 barrel a day in 2016. Pakistan can clinch the opportunity and get oil from Iran at cheaper rate through the sea-route of Gwadar-Chahbahar. It could also stop the illicit trade of oil by striking a deal with Iran for importing oil at agreed rates. This will usher trade relations between Pakistan and Iran and will be win-win situation for both the countries. Otherwise India will seek the opportunity and will enjoy friendly relations and vast potentials.

Trade matters and trading routes like roads, rail and sea already exist between Pakistan and Iran through Balochistan. What is needed is to modernize and strengthen the existing road-rail link between Quetta and Zahedan and opening of sea-routes. Pakistan could export Kino, rice, meat etc to Iran while Iran can export to Pakistan pistachio, almond and consumer items at cheaper rates. This is already being done but at a very low scale. Formal trade agreement will give impetus to existing trade and develop mutual trust between the two countries.

The successful nuclear deal can be a major game changer for the whole region. The Iranian regime can come out of its isolation and the apprehensions about its nuclear weapons can diminish. Iran has been facing international isolation since the Islamic revolution of 1979. Successive U.S governments have imposed sanctions on Iran from time to time. Iran has been accused of state sponsored terrorism and has survived as a pariah state for decades. The Sectarian conflicts that have erupted in the Middle East have also run havoc in Pakistani cities. The sectarian divide can be witnessed in Syria, Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen. The Arab uprisings or Arab Spring of 2011,

in which Arab people in several countries rose up against their repressive regimes has turned into an Arab nightmare. In Syria more than two hundred thousand people have been killed and millions have been displaced as refugees. Iraq is tearing itself apart with the Sunni-Shia divide and the rise of ISIS. The Province of Balochistan has witnessed the Killing of Ethnic Hazaras. Many Hazaras have been forced to take asylum in foreign countries. There is a possibility that with the successful nuclear deal, the sectarian conflicts in the region will subside. As the Iranian nuclear threat is receding, the countries will realize the costs of inter-state rivalries and counterproductive proxy wars in the region.

Conclusion:-

The Iranian Nuclear deal is at the point of completion after decades of uncertainty and threats of another Middle Eastern war. From the era of Muhammad Reza Pehalvi to the rise of Hassan Rouhani, the nuclear program has been at the forefront of international debates. Both economically and politically Balochistan has witnessed bleak periods in the past. The trade links between Iran and Pakistan can be restored and Balochistan can be the chief benefactor of the bilateral trade. Iran Pakistan pipeline, Pakistan's acute energy shortage and trade are points on the agenda. All these development projects have to pass through Balochistan. It's an historic opportunity for both the countries to forge ahead with new vistas for peace and prosperity.

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