

## **Irritants in Pak-Iran Relations Since 9/11 and its impacts on Balochistan**

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### **Abstract**

Pakistan's intimate and close relations with USA (Iran's as bitter adversary) since 9/11 adversely affected Pakistan relations with Iran. Pakistan close collaboration and cooperation with USA by providing US naval and military bases on its territory was strongly protested by Iran. Their contradictory policies and conflicting nature regarding global war against terrorism created rift and division between these two neighboring countries. Moreover, Iran's friendly and cooperative relations with India in the post 9/11 era, is another factor, which negatively impacted Pak-Iran relations. Indo-Iranian convergence of interests on Afghanistan and Central Asia., their mutual threats and perceptions at the regional and global level, and their growing coordination in Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf brought these two countries close to each other. And more significantly the development in Pak-GCC relations since 9/11 was yet, another factor, which had negative implications on Pak-Iran relations.

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### **Introduction**

The author has made a good attempt to discuss the main irritants in Pak-Iran relations in the post 9/11 scenario. An attempt is made to describe various challenges and constraints that hampered Pak-Iran relations. The significant improvement in Pak-US relations adversely affected Pak-Iran relations. Pakistan has served as an important strategic ally of the United States in the global war on terror, whereas Iran is US main adversary. Iran has a tense and acrimonious relationship with the United States for nearly three decades. The inclusion of Iran in the 'axis of evil' by President George Bush in 2002 brought this relationship to lowest ebb. While, on the other hand, Pakistan has established close and intimate relations with USA since 9/11 by providing military and field of defense, would severely affect Iran-Pakistan relations in the years to come. Against this background, the research paper underlines the growing warmth and cordiality in Indo- Iran relations, especially in the context of defense and military collaboration and its grave implication on Pakistan's security and geo-strategic interest in the region.

In addition, Pakistan's determined efforts to come close to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) since 9/11 are yet, another factor which has negatively impacted Pak-Iran relations. Pakistan's relations with Iran received another setback when Pakistan maintained a close links, especially security links with G.C.C. during the period of Iran-G.C.C. tensions and hostilities. Pakistan's evolving relations with Saudi Arabia caused a grave concern in Iran. Beside this, Iran's dispute with United Arab Emirates (UAE) over three islands in Persian Gulf, ideological differences (Shia-Sunni divide), the Iranian nuclear programme, and the military presence of the US in the GCC countries are some of the conflicting issues between Iran and GCC. Iran's hostile attitude towards the Persian Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia, would have a direct impact on Iran-Pakistan relations. The paper also discusses Pakistan's determined efforts to strengthen relations with Gulf cooperation Council in the view of Iran's tense and hostile relations with these countries.

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And finally, the paper gives an account of various hurdles and handicapped that remains a bulwark in the bilateral trade relations between the two countries. The respective viewpoints of each of the states would be given so as to enable the readers to gauge the depth of their differences. The likely course of their relations in the future is also discussed.

### **Development in Pak-US Relation Since 9/11**

USA has been enjoying excellent relations with Pakistan since 9/11 as a close partner and strategic ally in the global war on terrorism. Pakistan was also designated as a Non-NATO ally by USA. USA is, undoubtedly, an extremely important factor in shaping the Pakistan's security policy of since 9/11. Pakistan, once again, assumed the role of 'Frontline State' to fulfill US geo-strategic interest in the region.

US has provided Pakistan modern and innovative technologies to enhance its capacities to counter the growing threat of terrorism. US has also conducted joint military and naval exercise with the Pakistan military. Pakistan's intimate and close relations with USA (Iran's as bitter adversary) since 9/11 adversely affected Pakistan relations with Iran. There is a policy divergence between the two countries in the ongoing global war against terrorism. Pakistan has adopted a policy of active commitment with USA while, on the other hand, Iran followed 'the policy of 'active neutrality'. Iran wanted the active role of United Nations in a war against terrorism. Their contradictory policies and conflicting nature regarding global war against terrorism created rift and division between these two neighboring countries. Pakistan also provided US naval and military bases on its territory. Pakistan close collaboration and cooperation with USA was strongly protested by Iran. The war has provided US with the opportunity to push its covert agenda for restructuring the

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world security order according to its own geo-strategic interests. The main objective of USA is unilateralism and global domination, using the world organization (UNO) as the facilitator to the American long standing objectives for global domination. **(Hussain:2002)**

Post 9/11 US-Iran relations are marked by perpetual rivalry, hostility, doubts, discontent and dissatisfaction. Firstly, the 9/11 attacks occurred in the favor of Israeli interest in Middle East. Immediately after these attacks, the Jewish Lobby in United States urged the US administration to announce that Iran was the principal agent behind these attacks. The outcome of this attempt was placing Iran as one of the countries in President Bush's 'axis of evil.' In other words, Israel played a key role in declaring Iran as one of the countries in the US 'axis of evil', **(Pervin:1997)**, which comprises North Korea, Iraq and Iran. US believes that Iran is clandestinely pursuing efforts to gain nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons capabilities, in spite of its treaty commitments to forego these activities. Moreover, Iran's missile delivery capabilities and nuclear programs are perceived as threats to US interests in the region. **(Mortin:1999)** The main objective of USA is to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. United States is also strongly opposed to Iran's \$7 billion arms deal with Moscow signed in October 2001. She apprehends, that the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran would transform the regional balance of power and alter the decision-making calculus in the favor of Iran. **(Eisenstadet:1999)**

Moreover, Iran is one of the Middle-Eastern countries to opposed US efforts to make peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors including the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991, Oslo Agreement of 1993, and the Egyptian and Jordanian peace treaties with Israel. **(Baghat:2002)** Tehran perceives the peace process as an attempt by the United States, the main mediator, to impose American hegemony in the region and isolate Iran. In line with this perception, rejecting the peace process means resisting Washington's influence. **(Global Agenda:2002)**. Beside this, Iran has

always supported the Shia community in Southern Lebanon., who fought the Israel for more than two decades.

Pakistan is the only country in the region that provided USA with military and intelligence support. Pakistan provided the U.S.numerous military bases at Jacobabad, Pasni, Dalbandin and Shamsi. In addition, Pakistan provided over 35,000 troops to protect these coalition bases and increased border security that resulted in the capture of 420 high value Taliban and Al-Qaida fugitives. **(Fair:2004)** And more significantly, Pakistan's support of US policies on Afghanistan and Central Asia is perceived by Iran as being encircled by the USA, created further divergence in Pak-Iran relations. **(Alam:2004)**

One of the factors, which created irritant in Pak-Iran relations, was their fierce competition in Central Asia. For Pakistan, access through Afghanistan is a shortest route to Central Asian States. Durable peace and stability in Afghanistan and friendly relations with it is necessary to make any substantial headway in the direction of Central Asia. **(Matinuddin:1995)**. Bordering Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, Iran has natural geographical advantage, particularly for providing access to the landlocked Central Asian States **(Brill:1992)** Both Iran and Pakistan were deeply interested in the economic resources of Central Asia. Both are the members of ECO, and were trying their best to expand their economic ties with Central Asia. But with the passage of time, Pak-Iran cooperation and collaboration in Central Asia led to open tussle and competition, of which US strategy of economic encirclement of Iran since 9/11 is prominent.**(Ali:1993)** Pakistan's motive was to enhance its role and influence in the region, while Iran's main motive was to ensure its security, enhance its political and economic influence, and break its isolation. Iran perceives that Pakistan with the active coordination of United States, is also trying its best to prevent Iran to play a significant role in Afghanistan and Central Asia. **(Jalalzai:2002)** In addition, both Pakistan and Iran also have competing interests in developing the Gwadar port and the Chahabahr port as gateways to Central Asia. Iranian officials fear that

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Gwadar could be used by the United States as a base to monitor activities in Iran.(**Iran Focus: 2005**)

As the main strategy of USA was the isolation of Iran both at the regional and global level. Iran attaches a great importance to its relation with Central Asian State and desired to build a pipeline from Ashkabad to Persian Gulf, so that a large quantity of Central Asian oil and gas can be exported through Iran. Turkmenistan, with huge oil and gas reservoirs, signed an agreement with international consortium led by UNOCAL, a California based oil and Gas Company, to export its energy to the international markets via pipeline route that passes Iran and runs through Afghanistan and Pakistan. Washington's' objection to pipeline that goes through Iran and its preference for Central Asian oil and gas flow through and Afghanistan to Pakistan, Tehran feels that Islamabad has consciously become the part and parcel of the US strategy to isolate Iran. US policy of the economic encirclement of Iran and close Pak-US collaboration caused estrangement in Pak-Iran relations.(**Dickey:1994**) Iran believed that by preventing it significant role in Afghanistan and Central Asia, is the part of the US strategy of containing Iran.(**Jalalzai:2000**)

United States has also accused for providing funds to the insurgent Baloch population in Eastern Iran with the active support of Pakistan to destabilize Iran. Jundallah, a US-backed Baloch militant group (It is an insurgent Sunni Islamic organization based in the Iranian Seistan Balochistan.They is fighting for the rights of Sunni Muslims in Iran. It was founded in 2003 by Abdolmalek Rigi, with 2000 supporters. The group is involve in numerous terrorist and heroine acts i.e. kidnapping, assassinating, bomb blasting, smuggling, drug-trafficking and narcotics, plundering, looting and attacking on security guards) supporting the cause of Iran's Sunni minority living in provinces adjoining Balochistan. The group had claimed responsibility for a bus blast in Zahedan in February 2007, in which 11 members of

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the Iranian Revolutionary Guards were killed. Anti-Shia Pakistani organizations like the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have also backed the Jundullah. (Zulfiqar:(2007) Tensions between Pakistan and Iran intensified in response to the October 19, 2009 attacks against Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Sistan-Baluchistan province. President Ahmadinejad publically accused “certain officials in Pakistan” of involvement in the attacks.(CBS News:2009)

**Iran’s Concern**

Iran is very much concern for Pakistan’s strategic partnership with US in the post 9/11 period. There is a general perception that the United States has been exerting tremendous influence on Pakistan’s foreign policy, especially since 9/11, when Pakistan succumbed to US pressure to support her against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Since then, Pakistan has served as an instrument of US strategic goals in the region. There is no doubt that Iran is of immense strategic significance for Pakistan. It is not merely that Iran Provided Pakistan with strategic depth in the Indo-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971. Iran had friendly and cordial relations with the United States for nearly three decades. The inclusion of Iran in the ‘axis of evil’ by President George Bush in 2002 brought this relationship to lowest ebb. After 9/11 Iran continues to be a major focus of US rivalry and hostility. On the other hand, Pakistan serves as an important strategic ally and frontline State of the USA in the global war on terror.

Another factor, which could have strong bearing on Pakistan Iran relations, is US military presence in Pakistan. Since September 2001, US military presence has tremendously increased in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. President George W. Bush’s declaration of Iran as part of the so-called “axis of evil” in January 2002 became a great concern for Iran. Beside this, the growing Pak-US collaboration and

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the rising influence of US in Afghanistan and Central Asia was perceived by Iran as detrimental to its geo-political and economic objectives in the region.

### **Post 9/11 Development in Indo-Iranian Relations**

Iran's friendly and cooperative relations with India in the post 9/11 era, is another factor, which negatively impacted Pak-Iran relations. Indo-Iranian convergence of interests on Afghanistan and Central Asia., their mutual threats and perceptions at the regional and global level such as threats of terrorism (particularly from militant Sunni groups), security of the sea lanes of control (e.g., Strait of Hormuz), and their growing coordination in Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf brought these two countries close to each other. More significantly, their mutual exchange of visits at high leadership in the civilian and military levels further strengthened and intensified their bilateral mutual cooperation. Iran's role as energy supplier to the growing Indian market can't be underestimated. Iran is the world's second largest natural gas reserve, and India is one of the world's largest gas importers. As a gateway to Middle Eastern and Central Asian energy suppliers, Iran provides India an access to these regions. Both the countries affirmed their commitment to expand bilateral trade and commercial cooperation. Moreover, their joint effort to develop the Chahbahar port complex, the Chahbahar- Fahrenj-Bam railway link, and the Marine Oil Tanking Terminal will further boost trade and commercial relations between the two countries.(Mohan:2003)

In order to reduce and undermine Pakistan's role in Afghanistan, Iran is actively supporting the cause of India against Pakistan. Historically, Iran has been an acute competition with Pakistan for their influence in Afghanistan. Iran is strongly against of Pakistan's close ties with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. Iran has become more active in Afghanistan since 9/11 for providing a huge material and financial



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assistance. Iran's future strategy towards Afghanistan is the withdrawal of American forces, preventing the Taliban from gaining power, and to bring Afghanistan under its influence. Being situated on Pakistan's western borders, Iran provides significant politico-strategic advantage for India. This provides a convergence of Indo-Iranian interests in ensuring a moderate regime in Kabul that will not be friendly to Pakistan. **(David:2006)**

The tussle between Pakistan and Iran in Central Asia provided a golden chance to India, and she took a maximum advantage to exploit Pak-Iran rivalry and competition. India is also trying its best to create division and rift between Iran and Pakistan in Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as the formation of this regional organization and Iran and Pakistan as its founding members was not a pleasing development for India. **(Mushahid:1995)** India also assisted Iran to construct railway Line linking its rail network to that of Central Asia, the process considerably reduces Pakistan's strategic leverage over these landlocked states thus providing them alternative corridors to the sea. New Delhi has undertaken vital role in the development of Iranian port facilities along with the construction of road and rail links. Indian engineers have contributed immensely towards the upgradation and development of the Iranian port of Chahbahar. New Delhi and Tehran have also agreed to join hands in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and to develop an alternative access routes to the country via Iran by-passing Pakistan. Moreover, India is developing the Iranian Port of Chahbahar and laying railway tracks to connect it to Zaranj in Afghanistan. Moreover, India has constructed 218 kms long Zaranj-Delaram highway Line in Afghanistan and to link it to the Iranian port of Chahbahar as part of the Afghan circular road that connects Herat and Kabul via Mazar-e-Sharif in the north and Kandhar in the south thus provide an easy access to Afghanistan and Central Asia via Iran. **(Zeb:2003)** Pak-Iran conflicting interests in the affairs of Afghanistan resulted in the formation of their Indo-Iranian Nexus. **(Pant:2009)**

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Moreover, India's attempt to build roads linking Afghanistan and Central Asia and Iranian ports in response to China's building up of a deep-water port in Gwadar as a gateway to global markets for Central Asian resources. **(MacDonald:2003)** India has also developed intelligence outposts in Iran, including the Indian consulates in monitor Zahedan and Bandar Abbas, which will further enhance Indian influence in the Persian Gulf region. **(The Times of India, 2003)**

There is also growing defence cooperation between the two countries. India has trained Iranian naval engineers in Mumbai and at Viskhapatnam. Iran is also seeking combat training for missile boat crews and hopes to purchase from India simulators for ships and subs. Iran also anticipates that India can provide mid-life service and upgrades for its MiG-29 fighters, and retrofit its warships and subs in Indian dockyards. **(Calebrese:2002)** On the military side, India and Iran agreed to explore opportunities for joint military training and exercise. In the worst-case scenario of war with Pakistan, the possibility that India might access Iranian military bases, thereby encircling and containing Pakistan, cannot be excluded. Such a move would fundamentally alter Islamabad's strategic calculations. Depending on the strength of India-Iran relations, Iran could get access to advanced Indian military technology. There were also reports that Iran hopes that Indian technicians will refit and maintain Iran's T-27 tanks as well as its BMP infantry fighting vehicles and the towed 105 mm and 130mm artillery guns. **(Zeb:2003)** February 12)According to reports, India would get access to Iranian military bases in the event of a war with Pakistan.**(Berlin:2004)** India and Iran envisaged naval cooperation for sea-lane control and security. Indo-Iranian naval exercises such as the ones held in March 2003 and 2006 need to be resumed in future. Furthermore, bilateral naval exercises could also encompass antipiracy operations and cooperation.**(Chansoria:2010)**

**Pakistan's Concern**

Pakistan's foreign policy makers were visibly perturbed at the growing level of cooperation between Iran and India as they viewed it in the context of India's endeavor to encircle Pakistan, especially in the opening of an Indian Consulate in Bander Abbas. On the other hand, the mutual exchange of visits of the leaders of the two countries (India and Iran) was a grave concern for Pakistan, as detrimental to her geo-political interest in the region. Moreover, the convergence of Indo-Iranian interests in Afghanistan gave Pakistan the feeling of insecurity. It was really a great loss to Pakistan, when she faced danger to her security both from the eastern and western side. Pakistan's historic and time tested friend (Iran), which was the chief guarantor of Pakistan's security in the past, by providing her strategic depth, now in meaningful relations with India.

Both Iran and India were trying their best to prevent Pakistan from establishing any permanent base in Afghanistan. Indo-Iranian coordination in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf also had negative bearings on Pakistan's strategic interests. The growing expansion of Indian navy (which about 9 times greater than Pakistan) was a matter of grave concern for Pakistan. Furthermore, the Indo-Iranian Naval exercises of 2003, and 2006 became the matter of grave concern for Pakistan. And more important, the Indo-Iran economic collaboration in Central Asia adversely affected Pakistan's commercial interest in the region.

Pak-Iran hostility provided a golden chance to India to fulfill her ambitious designs. Iran's economic relations with India had negative implications on the ECO, the last ray of hope of economic collaboration among the member states, which in turn, lost her effectiveness and credibility. Her main objectives were to sabotage ECO, of which Pakistan and Iran were the founding members. The economic prosperity of Pakistan was not tolerated by India, as Pakistan became more

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beneficiary from ECO. Iran's good economic relations with India, has an adverse affects on economic corporation organization which was the last ray of hope for economic collaboration between the member states which lost its effectiveness and credibility. As the Pakistan times interpreted "close Indian Iranian ties as reflecting Indian success in countering the spirit of Iranian friendship with Pakistan, and to reduce the influence of ECO". Commenting on the growing Indo-Iran relations in Central Asia, Dr. Karl Fisher said that, "the growing economic relations between India and Iran in Central Asia would have a negative impact on Pak-Iran coordination in Central Asia." (Fisher:1995)

### **Improvement in Pak-GCC Relations**

The significant development in Pak-GCC relations since 9/11 was yet, another factor, which had negative implications on Pak-Iran relations. Pakistan's relations with Iran became strained following Pakistan's determined efforts to move closer to Arab countries, particularly, Arab Gulf States. There was an old rivalry between Iran and the Persian States. Of course, people talk of Arab-Ajam rivalry, but this was not manifest, when Shah was ruling Iran. This rivalry became more intensified after Islamic Revolution. The revolution was perceived by GCC as a threat to their securities, and she tired her best to undo it. One ecumenical appeal of the Islamic Revolution was the radicalization of Shia community inside and outside Iran, which caused a great apprehension in Saudi Arab and the Gulf States, because she had a substantial number of Shia population. The Shiites living in Gulf States are inclined to express greater empathy for and allegiance to Iran than their home countries.

Beside this, GCC's support to Iraq against Iran during the Iran-Iraq war(1980-1988), and Iran's strong resentment over close Saudi-US relations, particularly, in the

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military field created a major divergence between these two countries. **(Okruhlik:2003)** Riyadh was also accused by Tehran of waging economic warfare against Iran. **(Hunter:1990)** Another divergence in Iran-GCC is the growing of US-GCC relations. Since 9/11 Iran is more concerned with the new security challenges posed by the U.S. military presence Persian Gulf. United States has developed close relations with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf region. It has concluded several agreements with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates after the 1991 Persian Gulf War. According to these agreements the United States has to defend these Arab states against all hostile acts by Iran.

US has been trying to set up an anti-Iranian coalition, but seem to be finding lots of dead-ends. The suppression of Iranian nuclear capability became a matter of grave concern for USA. So she utilizes all the available and possible means and ways (diplomatic or coercive) in order to sabotage Iranian nuclear program as the only and ultimate objective to preserve her hegemony and supremacy in Persian Gulf. Iranian government believes that the security of the region should be maintained by the Persian Gulf states and not by USA. **(Richard:1997)**

GCC leaders feared that Iran would expand its influence and role outside of the Gulf in the greater Middle Eastern theater, possibly capitalizing on powerful allies such as Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon. With nuclear capabilities, Iran will be able to establish its supremacy in the Gulf region. Iran will also control oil prices and the Gulf imports and exports through the Strait of Hormuz. Under such circumstances, the rise of Iran as a regional power will not only alter the regional balance of power but, would be a severe set-back to Arab Gulf countries.**(El-Hokayem and Legrenzi:2006)** The GCC states expressed concern regarding Iran's role in Iraq while avoiding regional threats behind which Iran loomed. Arab Gulf leaders viewed the emerging axis, consisting of Iran, Syria, and Shi'i movements in Iraq and

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Lebanon, as a "Shi'i crescent." Thus, Iran played a leading role in creating an alliance that would oppose American hegemony and domination in the region.

Pakistan's close and friendly relations with GCC (Iran's main Foes) adversely affected Pak-Iran relations. Pakistan has provided military aid and expertise to the Saudi for decades. The relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arab became stronger in 2004, when a military cooperation was established between the two countries. Increase in training facilities to the number of Saudi nuclear physicists at KRL, Kahuta, supports Pakistani defence industry by purchasing Al Khalid tanks, offers the services to Pakistani government contractors a worth of \$7billion for Saudi border protection program, stationing of a 10000 Pakistani soldiers in Saudi Arab with the option to increase to 80,000 in the event of a major conflict, a joint military command in Saudi Arabia, training of Saudi pilots along with Pakistani Air Force pilots in Rawalpindi, and the supply of nuclear capable missiles to Saudi Arabia created a major divergence in Pak-Iran relations as latter relations with Saudi are at lowest ebb. Similarly, Pakistan's growing relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) produced a major impediment in Pak-Iran relations as Iran's relations with UAE have been tense since decade. One of the issue of contention between the UAE and Iran is the Iranian occupation of three islands, namely Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Gulf, which are claimed by the UAE.

The confrontation between Iran and the United Arab Emirates escalated when UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan compared the continuous occupation by Iran of three islands belonging to UAE with the "the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian lands." Iran conquered these islands (Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb) during the time of the Shah in 1971, the year that the Emirates gained independence from British rule. Recently, Iran established military camps there. The rulers of the Emirates, on the other hand, continue to reiterate their

demand that Iran restore these islands or agree to international arbitration, but, Iran refuses (**Al Arabiya:2010**) In August 2008, Iran opened two administrative offices in Abu Musa for the purpose of ship registration and maritime rescue. In a statement, the GCC Secretary-General Abdurrahman Al-Attiyah ‘strongly denounced Iran’s opening of two administrative offices on Abu Musa Island, which belongs to the UAE and is occupied forcibly by Iran’, and also added that the Iranian action constitutes an ‘illegitimate action on an indivisible part of the UAE’.( **Arab News:2008**) UAE fears that this will give Iran greater control over shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. (**BBC News:2008**) Pakistan supports the right of the United Arab Emirates to regain the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, their continental shelves, territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone being an integral part of the UAE’. (**Mazel:2001**) Pakistan has not only enjoys good relations with UAE, but the two countries have common concerns, perceptions on many regional and international issues.. Pakistan’s principal supports UAE’s efforts to restore the three islands from Iran created a divergence in Pak-Iran relations.

Beside this, Pakistan’s military support to the Yemeni government against the Houthis got the displeasure of Iran towards Pakistan. The Houthis, also known as Al Houthi, are a powerful local Yemeni clan in the northwest Yemeni province of Saada, which borders Saudi Arabia. Since 2004, they have waged a rebellion against the central government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Houthis consider Saleh's regime illegitimate and "an ally of Americans and Jews. The Houthis, who are from the Zaydi sect of Shia Islam, claim to be fighting for the rights of the Zaydi Shiite community. They have been fighting Yemen's government for five years; The Houthis main objective is to establish a revivalist Imamate (the Shiite version of a caliphate) in Yemen through their Organization of Youthful Believers. In the fall of 2009, the Saudi air force intervened on the side of the Yemeni government, bombing

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Houthi regions and urging local Yemenis to flee. The rebellion is backed by Iran (a Shiite regime) in the same way that Iran backs Lebanon's Hezbollah organization: to destabilize the central government, establish a theocratic state, and to wage a proxy war against American interests.<sup>39</sup>

The Saudis have accused Iran of supporting a Shi'i uprising on its border with Yemen, further destabilizing the region. Iran has been accused of providing ideological and material support to the Houthis. President Saleh stated that Yemeni security authorities recovered two Houthi cells in the capital Sana'a who confessed to receive \$100,000 from Iran. Ali Saleh frequently exaggerates threats to his regime and requested foreign assistance in order to crush and suppress repressive attacks from the northern and southern rebellions. **(Yemen Observer:2009)**

The uprising Bahrain in 2011, known as the Lulu Revolution, is a series of demonstrations by Shia population, particularly by unemployed youth against government of King Ahmad, to abolish the constitutional monarchy of the Sunni Al Khalifa family and to achieve greater political freedom and equality for the majority Shia population, who have a largest number of seats in the state legislature. Pakistan has enjoyed excellent relations with Bahrain sent forces in a goodwill order to end the ongoing tension and to restore law and order situation. Over 1,000 Pakistanis have so far been recruited in March 2011 alone, while 1,500 more would be hired in the next few weeks. **(Abna.Co.Ahlul Bayt News Agency:2011)** Iran's declared solidarity with the uprising of the Shiite majority in Bahrain and its strong opposition to any kind of military assistance provided by foreign governments to the Bahraini regime with a view to suppressing the public struggle for democracy in that country has meant that Pakistan had some explaining to do to Iranian officials in order to salvage its growing economic ties with Iran. **(Bolghasem:2011)**

#### **Iran's Concern**



Iranian government strongly protested over the growing Pak-Saudi relation under the umbrella of USA. According to Iran, Pakistan's closer cooperation and coordination with Saudi Arab (Iran's principal adversary in the Gulf) will make the latter more powerful to impose its hegemony and supremacy in the Gulf region. Iran is very much concerned about Pakistan's military support to the Yemeni government against the Houthis. Houthis got the full financial and political support of Iran. Their support for the opposite faction in Yemen further increased the cleavages between the two countries. Pakistan's support to the government of Sheikh Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa against Shia was greatly resented by Iran, which is providing moral, diplomatic, and material support to Shia for the formation of purely Islamic Theocratic government in Bahrain. Iran has warned Pakistan that diplomatic relations between the two neighbors would be affected if Islamabad fails to stop recruiting Pakistani military forces helping the Bahraini army crackdowns. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Behrouz Kamalvandi has asked the Pakistani charge d'affaires in Tehran to Iran's Foreign Ministry to convey Iran's serious reservations about Pakistan's recruitment of retired military officials for the Bahraini army to help with the crackdown of Bahraini protesters demanding their democratic rights. The Iranian official warned that if the recruitment continues, it will have serious ramifications for diplomatic relations between Islamabad and Tehran.

### **Conclusion**

The development and cordiality in Pak-US relations since 9/11 negatively affected Pak-Iran relations. Pakistan's close relations with USA whom Iran considered as 'great Satan' stood in the way of cordial Pak-Iran relations. Beside this, their contradictory policies regarding the war against terrorism, Pakistan's whole-hearted military, intelligence, and logistic support to US in the war, the continuous presence of US forces on Pakistani territory, US-Pak coordination and cooperation in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Persian Gulf against the Iranian interest, the Jundallah

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Organization, the inclusion of Iran in the list of “axis of evil” and the lack of support from Pakistan, and above all, Pakistan’s neutral and non-cooperative attitude towards Iran in the ongoing US-Iran nuclear tension further deteriorated Pak-Iran relation

Moreover, the growing cooperation between Iran and India, particularly in the defence field has negative implications for Pakistan. Any Indian presence on Iranian military bases would allow India a more subtle operational use of early warning, intelligence gathering, and other facilities against Pakistan. Similarly, the 80-person strong Indian consulate in Zahidan and the establishment of the Indian consulate at Bandar Abbas in May 2002, has caused a grave concern for Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan expressed its deep concern that the Indian Consulate at Bandar Abbas, through monitoring devices, will be able to follow movement of ships in the Persian Gulf region. , Pakistan, on many occasions, expressed its uneasiness over the growing India’s engagement with Iran which runs counter to Indian efforts to isolate the Pakistan in the region. In fact, Pakistan has been apprehensive of India’s close cooperation with Iran as detrimental to its geo—political and strategic objectives in South-western region.

Yet another factor that can adversely impact upon Iran-Pakistan relations is Pakistan’s determined efforts to establish close with Saudi Arabia, resulting from Saudi Arabia’s new “Look East” policy. In the post 9/11 scenario, both the countries (Pakistan and Saudi Arabia) have decided to give a new direction to their bilateral mutual relationship. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia’s relations with Iran are far from friendly. They have a history of mutual distrust and suspicion. President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Iran’s insistence on pursuing its nuclear programme have cast a shadow over Iran’s relations with all the Gulf Arab states, particularly with Saudi Arabia. Though, at this stage, to some, it may seem premature to reckon Pakistani-Saudi ties as a factor that could retard the progress in Iran-Pakistan relations, Pakistan feels to be less motivated to build on its relation with Iran at the

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expanse of its ties with Saudi Arabia as the latter being the world's largest producer of oil is better positioned to satiate Pakistan's ever increasing energy needs. More significantly, the cordiality and warmth in Pak-UAE relations and former's principal supports UAE's efforts to restore the three islands from Iran created a divergence in Pak-Iran relation. Beside this, Pakistan's military support to the Yemeni government against the Houthis got the displeasure of Iran towards Pakistan. Moreover, the dispatched of a huge contingent of Pakistan's military to Bahrain for the purpose of suppressing Shiite majority gave a severe blow to Pak-Iran relations. More specifically, Iran's declared solidarity with the uprising of the Shiite majority in Bahrain and its strong opposition to any kind of military assistance provided by foreign governments to the Bahraini. Also, ties with Saudi Arabia will be of far more use than those with Iran for securing India's better standing in the Muslim world.

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