**The Evolving Landscape Of Pak-Iran Relations**

[Dr Zafar Khan Safdar](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/dr-zafar-khan-safdar/)

April 27, 2024

With HE the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisolsadati having wrapped up his three-day visit to Pakistan, now is a perfect opportunity to explore the rich tapestry of cultural, economic, and geopolitical ties between these two countries. Being the first visit since the Israeli-Gazan conflict, this visit, accompanied by senior Iranian officials and a commercial group, represents a significant milestone.

While in Lahore and Karachi, he also met with provincial authorities to further strengthen ties within the area. The visit aimed to strengthen bilateral connections with a focus on trade, veterinary health, special economic zone, security, culture, science & technology, communication, energy, agriculture, and encouraging people-to-people contacts.

Talks about global and regional developments, regional stability, and terrorism were also covered during the visit. Both countries understood that in order to create a path of cooperation and partnership in the twenty-first century, they needed to draw on their shared history and interests.

Iran and Pakistan have a rich history of cultural, economic, and geopolitical exchanges, dating back to antiquity. The historical bonds between Iran and Pakistan trace back to antiquity, with cultural and trade links flourishing along the ancient Silk Road. These ties were further solidified by shared historical experiences, including the spread of Islam and subsequent cultural exchanges.

The historical bonds trace back to antiquity, with cultural and trade links flourishing along the ancient Silk Road.

People-to-people relations between Iran and Pakistan have remained resilient, with cultural affinities, linguistic similarities, and shared traditions fostering a sense of kinship. Economic collaboration between Iran and Pakistan holds immense potential, with both countries possessing abundant natural resources and complementary economies. Initiatives like the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline aim to enhance energy cooperation and economic prosperity.

The border between Iran and Pakistan represents the convergence of cultures and civilizations, and both nations have reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace and stability along their shared frontier. Trade ties between Iran and Pakistan have seen steady growth, bolstered by geographical proximity and shared economic interests. Joint security exercises between Iran and Pakistan serve as a testament to their shared commitment to combating common threats. Despite multiple challenges, both nations have consistently pledged to foster mutual understanding and cooperation.

Cultural exchanges form the bedrock of Iran-Pakistan relations, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other’s heritage. Religious pilgrimages to holy sites in Iran hold profound spiritual significance for Shia Muslims in Pakistan, underscoring the importance of religious freedom and tolerance in bilateral relations.

Iran and Pakistan need to increase trade relations, to lessen customs barriers and to focus is on streamlining trade processes and removing obstacles, with an emphasis on electronic information exchange. Iran’s annual export to Pakistan has increased by 39% in 2022-23, with over four million tons of non-oil products valued at over $2 billion exported from the country to Pakistan. This represents a 23 and 39 % increase in weight and value compared to the earlier year’s corresponding period.

The officials of the two countries have targeted to enhance bilateral trade by $10 billion, and effective steps have been taken to spur trade between Tehran and Islamabad. Iran plans to enhance agricultural ties with Islamabad, focusing on exporting urea, chemical fertilizers, and agricultural machinery fields. Pakistan plans to begin constructing the long-delayed IP pipeline from Gwadar port to the Iranian border soon, as part of HE President Raisi’s visit.

Pakistan may redo the mapping and engineering process for the construction of an 80 km gas pipeline to the Iranian border. The joint Iran-Pakistan gas project has been delayed for 10 years and was originally due to be completed in December 2015, with operations slated to start in January 2015. Pakistan and Iran have agreed to establish a joint special economic zone to boost economic ties. The federal cabinet approved a Memorandum of Understanding, with the zone to be located on the Ramdan-Gabad border.

This visit and the reaffirmation of bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Iran marks a significant milestone in their enduring relationship. Both countries recognize the importance of deepening their strategic partnership to address common challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

With a strategic geographic location bridging South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Pakistan and Iran have immense potential to serve as regional anchors for stability and development. The visit will underscore a shared commitment to exploring new avenues of collaboration across various sectors, including bolstering bilateral trade and investment, advancing energy cooperation, and enhancing connectivity through initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

People-to-people exchanges, cultural diplomacy, educational linkages, and tourism promotion efforts are integral components of the broader strategy to deepen societal ties and enhance mutual appreciation of each other’s rich heritage and traditions. The agreements and talks made during the visit have set the stage for increased collaboration in a number of areas, which will be advantageous to both nations and promote peace and development in the region.

Through increased interaction and constructive communication to address shared concerns, Pakistan and Iran are well-positioned to jointly steer a more prosperous and integrated future for both their peoples and the region. The vision for Pakistan-Iran relations is one of shared prosperity, stability, and cooperation, unlocking new opportunities for economic growth, infrastructure development, and regional integration.

*The writer is a PhD in Political Science, and visiting faculty at QAU Islamabad. His area of specialization is political development and social change. He can be reached at zafarkhansafdar@yahoo.com and tweet@zafarkhansafdar*