

Pakistan-Iran Relations in the Changing Global Scenario Post 9/11

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ABSTRACT

Pak-Iran had been enjoying friendly and cordial relations since the inception of Pakistan in 1947 and Iran was the first country to recognize it. Even on Kashmir issue Iran has always stood by the stance of Pakistan. During calamities and other natural disasters, Iran has always been the first country to come to the rescue of Pakistani people. Both countries also practiced the hostile relation on the factors of Afghanistan, Baluchistan issue, ethnic violence, Iran close relations with India and Pakistan attachment with Saudi Arabia. Apart from these divergent issues in their bilateral relations, both Iran and Pakistan feel the realization of commonalities of interests with the presence of US in Afghanistan post 9/11 2001. For that purpose the Saudi-Yemen crises 2015 is a test of their new adopted approach towards the regional issue. Islamabad neutral stance towards the Yemen crises ensured Tehran about the sincerity of its new adopted policy. Both the states were also tightly linked by the Chinese joining in the Gas Pipe Line by investing 2 billion \$ to complete the hopeless project. Apart from economic perspective this project will also put an end to the political tension that is considered to be the Cancer of region's peace.

KEYWORDS: Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, War on Terror, Taliban, US, Gas Pipe Line, Relations.

INTRODUCTION

The post 9/11 international political system has reshaped the preferences of the foreign policy objectives of both Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan was left with no other option but to revisit its traditional policy of supporting Taliban and cooperate with US and its allies in the war against terrorism. On the other hand, the fall of Taliban government was a positive development for Iran but it led to a new security dilemma for Iran. US remain the biggest enemy in the Iranian threat perception. And after the beginning of war on terrorism, Iran is surrounded by the presence of US forces in its neighboring countries. In addition, the Bush administration included Iran in its Axis of Evil, implying that a regime change in Tehran had emerged as a high priority in Washington. (Schroen, 2005)

The marginal improvement in the US-Iran relations since 1997 were negated by the infamous speech by the US president G.W Bush in 2002 in which he termed Iran part of the axis of evil along with Iraq and Libya. Iran had tried to improve its relations with US by showing positive gestures. Iran strongly condemned the 9/11 attacks on US soil and offered its support to US in war against terrorism. Iran also played crucial role in the selection of Hamid Karzai as the president of Afghanistan. However, US failed to comply with the good gestures shown by Iran and instead blamed Iran for being the sponsor of terrorism. The Iranian analysts are of the view that this accusation was real surprise for the Iranian people and its officials. Iranian apprehensions were further increased by the new Bush Doctrine, which brought the issues of democratization of the Middle East and pre-emption strategy as a center stage in the US foreign policy. (Hussain, 2002)

Iran and Pakistan made some attempts at improving their bilateral ties after the fall of the Taliban in 2002. Khatami's visit to Islamabad in December 2002 was a major step towards the normalization of bilateral ties between the two states. However, the security conditions in Afghanistan remained the major reason to cast its shadow over this relationship. Iran moved quickly to establish diplomatic ties with the Karzai government installed after the rout of the Taliban. An despite US antagonism towards Iran, Tehran-Kabul ties have largely remained immune from the US influence, as the Karzai government has made a sustained effort to keep Tehran in good humour. Iran can bring its influence to bear on the Hazara population as well as on the northern and western parts of Afghanistan which are heavily influenced by it. It has supported the reconstruction efforts under taken in Afghanistan by the international community, contributing to infrastructure projects and humanitarian endeavors. (Alam, 2004)

A Political stable and economically viable Afghanistan is viewed as essential for Iranian security by its officials. Iran along with Pakistan has signed Kabul declaration which aims to work for the friendly relations with neighboring states. Yet Pakistan-Iran ties continue to suffer for a whole host of reasons, with little indication of improvements on any front in the short to medium term.

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Pakistan Foreign Policy Post 9/11

The 9/11 terrorist outrage transformed the world once again. The bush administration went berserk, treated civilized international norms with contempt, poured scorn on the United Nations, launched a sanguinary war of revenge on Afghanistan, and premeditated aggression on a false charge against Iraq. The wars conceived by Neo-Conservatives to mark a century of 'American Imperial' proved a disaster, for the victims as well as the perpetrator. (Fani, 2005)

Due to its geo-strategic location, its contiguity with Afghanistan, and one of the three countries having diplomatic ties with her, who was immediately labeled as a sanctuary of the terrorists headed by Osama bin laden, Pakistan was bound to be frazzled in days ahead. Within few days, the clairvoyance of Pakistani foreign policy and security experts was justified when it was given a proverbial Hobson's choice in the words of President Bush:

"Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (Fani, 2005)

The fall of the Taliban provided the golden opportunity to Pakistan and Iran to revisit and improve their bilateral relations. Both Iran and Pakistan termed the election of President Karzai's selection a positive development for the Afghanistan. Islamabad kept Tehran informed of the limited logistical facilities it provided for the coalition forces, abating its concerns rooted in the hostility of the United States since the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. The dominant position acquired by the Western countries in Afghanistan had the effect of eliminating Pakistan-Iran rivalry for influence in Afghanistan. (Kumar, 2008)

War on terrorism has seriously affected the security and socio-economic development of Pakistan. Pakistan has lost billions of Dollars due to precarious security conditions in the country. But most importantly, Pakistan has lost the 50 thousands lives since 2001 to date. However, the most ironic fact is that international community has failed to appreciate Pakistan's role and instead has expressed concerns over Pakistan's role and policy in war against terrorism. The issue is that US and its allies have limited stakes in the region. Pakistan has to live with and deal with the repercussions that will emanate after the drawdown of the NATO forces. (Khan, 2013)

However another view is that Pakistan's bad domestic policy has adversely affected its foreign policy choices. The corruption, poor governance, lack of political vision and absence of well planned economic policies have seriously undermined the socio-economic development in Pakistan. This has also distorted Pakistan's image in the rest of the world. In addition the distorted image has also the major factor for the lack of appreciation by the international community about Pakistan's role in war against terrorism. But the consensus in the world remains that Pakistan is key to the solution of Afghanistan. (Hashmi, 2005)

However, there is no doubt that the issues of governance, political incompetence and corruption is deeply embedded in Pakistani society and these problems are the major causes of Pakistan's underdevelopment. But these are not the only factors and the role of regional security environment and foreign involvement are also the major factors. The international community needs to understand the regional dynamics and limitations of Pakistan's foreign policy options. (Abbassi, 2007)

5.3 Iran Foreign Policy Post 9/11

The Iranian officials claim that its foreign policy architecture is based on four basic principles. The first principle is that Iran rejects all kinds of external interference and dominance in its decision making regarding the security issues. Secondly, Iran's foreign policy objective is to ensure the territorial integrity and its independence. Thirdly, Iran claims that the core objective of its foreign policy is also to work for the purpose of safeguarding the rights of the Muslims throughout the world without being an ally of any hegemonic power. Fourthly, Iran has vowed that its foreign policy would be aimed to have peaceful relations with all the other sovereign states. (Afrasiabi, 2002)

They further claim that these objectives of its foreign policy have guided the making of Iranian external relations since the Islamic Revolution. The Iranian official version is that the consensus exists in the Iranian society including the religious leadership regarding these basic principles of Iran's foreign policy architecture. There is also realization in Iran that it is very imperative to have good relations with the Western powers as well for the economic prosperity of the country. Moreover, the Iranian official believe that the controversy surrounding its nuclear program has seriously distorted its image in the rest of the world and Iranian foreign policy needs serious review of its policy regarding its nuclear program. (Little, 2008)

During the years of late 1990s and early 2000s, Iran's foreign policy goals had been to relate the domestic issues with its external policy and improve its relations with the Western world through the policy of restraint. In this regard the role of President Khatami is very significant to end the diplomatic isolation of Iran. Through the moderate execution of Iran's foreign policy, Khatami successfully portrayed the positive image of Iran. In this regard he further took initiative and in contrast to the phenomena of Clash of civilization, he suggested the phenomena of dialogue among civilizations. This air of positive attitudes by the Iranian leadership were seen by the optimist as a huge achievement for the regional peace and security. Moreover, it also refuted the idea that Iranian leadership is rigid and its worldview is narrow that would be destabilizing for the regional security. (Barzegar, 2008)

However the following developments in the Iranian politics turned the whole situation and all the prospects for peace became slim. The Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's coming into power in Iran totally changed the foreign policy outlook of Iran. The new president was totally opposite to its predecessor regarding his worldview and vision about the Iran's security objectives. He revisited and took tough stance on the issues related to Iran's security, its relations with US and most importantly about the nuclear program of Iran. (Ehteshami, 2008) During his rule, Iran's relations with US and West were marked by the high tensions. Consequently the diplomatic isolation of Iran grew under his rule and Iran also had to face several military and economic sanctions that seriously halted its socio-economic development in the country. Some of the analysts believe that it is the religious clergy that is responsible for Iran's rigidity in its foreign policy architecture. (Mishra, 2008)

However, due to the negative impact of sanctions on Iran which has made the Iran's economy very weak, the realization has come to the new leadership that Iran needs to cooperate with international community on the issues related to its nuclear program. The new president Hassan Rohani is considered to be very moderate and has pledged to end the diplomatic isolation of Iran. In a significant development, the world has seen a partial deal signed between Iran and US and its allies to solve the issue of Iranian nuclear weapon program. (Rakel, 2007)

Pakistan Iran Relations after 9/11

The year of 1979 not only saw the historic event of Islamic revolution in Iran, but the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan also occurred in the same year. Moreover, Iraq under the dictatorship of Saddam Husain also launched military offence against Iran. The security calculus was totally transformed for Pakistan, Iran and US. The new emerging scenarios required renewed security strategies to ensure their respective regional security objectives. During the Iraq-Iran war, Pakistan initially condemned the Iraqi aggression and extended its support for Iran. But later on, due to the sectarian factor and Saudi Arab's influence Pakistan instead start supporting Iraq against Iran. (Fawcett, 2013)

This policy backfired for Pakistan as in response Iran's relations with India saw significant improvements. In Afghanistan, Iran also supported Northern Alliance against the Pakistani policy of backing Taliban militants. The tension in Pak-Iran relations remained high till the regional environment changed in September 2001. The defeat of Taliban in Afghanistan and fall of the Saddam rule in Iraq were very positive developments for the Iranian security calculus. It also provided opportunities for Iran to engage Pakistan to bring significant improvements in their bilateral relations. The major factor that caused tension in their bilateral relations of Taliban rule came to an end and now both countries could have work together to develop consensus on the Afghan solution by keeping in mind and by learning lessons from their past mistakes. (Chanley, 2008)

There was realization at both sides regarding the opportunity to improve their relations. In this regard, soon after the NATO occupation in Kabul, Iranian foreign minister visited Pakistan and both countries issued joint statement that both states would work together in the solution of the Afghan issue. (Sullivan, 2008)

But after those so many years, the situation is not very optimistic regarding the improvements in the Pak-Iran relations. The issue of Afghanistan continues to be the area of divergence for both countries. Pakistan's relations with Hamid Karzai's government have never been cordial. On the other hand, Iran has openly supported Karzai's government to safeguard its own security interests in the region. Pakistan is also very apprehensive about the India's growing role in Afghanistan whereas Iran is quite willing to work closely with India in Afghanistan. (Sullivan, 2008)

Diplomatic Relations

Both countries have tried to improve their diplomatic relations especially after 9/11. The realization becomes in the backdrop of changed international security environment. Both countries face serious challenges that required strong political support from the other powers. The closer relationship would guarantee the better capacity of both states to coop with the new emerged challenges. In this regard, National Security Council's secretary Hassan Rowhani visited Pakistan to meet the Pakistani president Pervaiz Musharraf. (Thomas Johnson, 2004)

In his visit, both countries agreed to enhance diplomatic interactions to have in depth understanding regarding each other's genuine concerns about the regional security issues. Later on, Iran and Pakistan became successful in persuading Afghanistan to take them into confidence regarding the upcoming political developments in Afghanistan. They also agreed that they will work jointly to promote peace and stability in the region. The consensus was also developed that new government in Afghanistan would involve all the ethnic groups in Afghanistan. (Zaman, 2012) The year of 2002 also saw the first visit of an Iranian president since 1992 when Iranian president Mohammad Khatam visited Pakistan. The president was associated with high profile officials in the Iranian government and their posture suggested that Iran is very serious to strengthen its diplomatic ties with Pakistan. The objective of the visit was to overlook the past experiences and work for the beginning of new relationship between Pakistan and Iran.

(Barzegar, 2008)The serious discussion was also held regarding the prospects for the gas pipeline projects. The prospects for other areas for economic cooperation were also discussed. Iranian president held meetings with Pakistani prime minister and the president. Both countries signed several agreements and MOUs related to economic cooperation. The Iranian president also read the Dialogue Amon Civilization paper at a policy think-tank in Islamabad. During this visit, both countries also pledged to increase the people to people contact and to increase the cultural exchange as well. Iranian president also visited the places of political significance for Pakistan as well. At the end of this visit Iran termed the visit successful and very friendly. (Thomas Johnson, 2004)

To respond positively, Pakistani premium Zafar ullah Jamali also visited Iran in 2003. The purpose of his visit was to hold negotiations with his counterpart regarding economic ties, regional security and improvement the Pak-Iran relations in general. Pakistan also supported Iran's principle stand on its nuclear program; the right to develop nuclear program for peaceful purposes granted by the NPT. However Pakistan also asked Iran to fully cooperate with the IAEA regarding its investigation about Iran's possible activities to build nuclear bomb. (Hussain, 2002)

Security Relations

Pakistan and Iran have set the joint ministerial commission on security with the purpose to enhance cooperation in counter terrorism operations and fighting the issues like drug trafficking and sectarian violence. Regular interactions between the two sides have become the norm at various levels from top political to intelligence services. This growing interaction on security issues has been deemed important by both sides in light of the rapidly evolving geographical environment in the region. (Sumita, 2008)

Economic Relations

There exist a great potential in the economic domain of Pak-Iran relations. Both countries can get immense benefit by increasing their bilateral trade. The scope of the potential trade is very vast but unfortunately both states have been unable to fully utilize the opportunity to enhance the scope of their bilateral trade. Pakistan and Iran's trade has traditionally been limited to the energy needs of Pakistan. The lack of trade has resulted in the socio-economic developments of both countries. Pakistan's energy crisis and growing energy demands make the economic partnership of Pakistan and Iran very natural given the fact that Iran is energy rich state. Iran is the second largest reserves of natural gas and it has also the fourth largest oil reserves in the world. (Tehsin, 2014)

Facing an acute balance of payments crisis in 2008, Pakistan asked Iran to supply crude oil on a deferred payments basis, to which Iran agreed, despite falling oil prices causing trouble for the Iranian economy. Iran is supplying 1100 MW of electricity to Pakistan to mitigate an acute power shortage in the country, up from the 35 MW that Iran usually supplies to the border areas. There has been a recent focus on increasing connectivity across the border regions, and the countries have declared the two Balochistans on either side of their borders as twin cities to further enhance trade, economic and cultural links in the region. (Basit, 2008)

Pakistan and Iran's growing economic ties suggest that both countries have realized the importance of the economic collaboration and its benefits for the socio-economic development of the both countries. India's hegemonic attitude in its economic policies has also created realization in Pakistan and Iran that they would have to work jointly to safeguard their economic interests in the region. Pakistan and Iran have various institutional mechanisms in their economic relations. The Ministerial level Joint Economic Commission (JEC), established in 1984, held its 17th session in Tehran from June 28-29, 2008. The 18th session was due to be held in Islamabad in December 2009 but was postponed at the Iranian request. The Commerce Secretary level Joint Trade Committee (JTC), in tandem with the meeting of Commerce Ministers, was held in Tehran from 11-12 May 2009. The meeting discussed the implementation and expansion of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), operational since September 01, 2006 (currently concession of 647 items are being granted by both sides). (Tehsin, 2014)

Iran-Pakistan cooperation on transportation issues expanded greatly in August 2009, when the two agreed to inaugurate an international freight rail line from Islamabad to Istanbul via Tehran, A "pilot project" of ECO, Islamabad and Tehran are seeking outside credit harmonise rail gauge differences between the two. In addition to promoting its regional identity with Iran, Pakistan could further its sense of regionalism with Iran through, a transnational identity which does not recognize national borders, to further promote economic collaboration. (Montazeran, 2004)

Trade:

The volume of bilateral trade between the two countries continues to progress and has for the first time reached US \$ one billion per annum (Pakistan's exports US \$ 333.119 million and imports US \$ 628.326 million, July 2008-March 2009). However, the balance of trade (US\$ 295.2 million) remains in Iran's favour due to heavy import of oil on deferred payment. The trade volume remains disappointingly low and no serious parameters are set to correct this

deficiency. Pakistan's exports include rice, fruits & vegetables, cotton fabric (woven), chemicals etc while major imports from Iran are petroleum products, ores, chemical materials, iron & steel, machinery etc.(Montazeran, 2004).

The annual bilateral trade figures for the last five years are as under:

Year	Pakistan's Exports	Imports from Iran	Total	Balance
2007-08	92.32 Rice (46.28)	283.49 Oil (164.16)	375.81	(-) 191.17
2008-09	146.98 Rice (69.17)	242.08 Oil (87.55)	389.06	(-) 95.1
2009-10	154.63 Rice (96.9)	450.27 Oil (145.18)	604.90	(-) 254.73
2010-11	167.38 Rice (92.71)	405.19 Oil (139.89)	572.57	(-) 237.81
2011-12	213.80	544.01	751.81	(-) 330.21
2012-13	333.119	628.326	961.445	(-) 295.2

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2012-13

Problem areas

Major impediments in enhancing our exports to Iran are;

- High import tariffs: 70-100% on textile & garments; 40-60% on surgical goods
- Stringent quarantine requirements, than those of the EU, hinder export of fruits like kinnow & mango through normal channels and encourage traders on both sides to employ informal trade.
- Smuggling: in 2011-12, the total volume of our bilateral trade was US \$ 961.445 million.

However it is estimated informal trade during the period were over a billion US \$. Items in demand from Iran are petroleum products, in Iran while items like rice, fruits and textiles from Pakistan, elimination/ reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers could control it. (Ahmad, 2014)

- Attestation fee: Iranian's charge Rs 6,000/- for attestation of commercial invoices. Pakistan has raised this issue with the Iranians but not yet resolved to mutual satisfaction.
- Non-tariff barriers:
- Iranian visa procedures are stringent, repeated presence of the applicant and medical requirements discourage Pakistani businessmen and lorry drivers.
- Business transactions between the two countries are conducted through the Asian Clearing Union (ACU). The ACU transactions take more time than normal L/Cs. Iran's nuclear issue has made opening of L/Cs difficult.
- UN restrictions on Iranian Banks (Milli, Sepah, Sedarat and Mellat) have affected Pakistani exports.

IPI Gas Pipeline

IPI project has a huge significance to shape the economic and political outlook of the region. The total length of the IPI gas pipeline would be 2778 km and its cost is estimated to be around 8 billion US dollars. The pipeline would pump more than 145 million cubic meters (mmsc) gas daily in its initial phase. Pakistan would get the 62 mmsc and Indian share would be around 85 mmsc. (Sumita, 2008)

The experts are of the opinion that it will take five years to complete this project provided the safe security situation. The route of the pipeline would be starting from Assaluyeh and will reach India by passing through the Pakistani city Multan. The project would bring significant economic benefits to all three countries but Pakistan would be most benefited given the acute energy shortage it is facing. The project can also include China as well since China is also very keen to import energy resources from this part of the world.(Khan, 2013)

However, the project is facing serious challenges due to the economic sanctions imposed by UN and US due to the alleged Iranian activities of developing nuclear bomb. US is continuously pressurising Pakistan and India to scrap the project and threatens of strong diplomatic consequences if Pakistan and India go ahead to initiate the IPI project. At one hand India has signed an agreement with Iran to import LNG for 25 years and the deal has cost India 40 billion US dollars. On the other hand India has refused to make any further progress on the IPI projects raising the issue of economic sanctions on Iran by the international community. Pakistani perspective on this issue is that India is deliberately delaying the project since it significantly helps Pakistan to overcome its energy crisis. (Khan, 2013)

Iran is blessed with second largest reserves of natural gas in the world. Moreover, OPEC reported that Iran's oil production capacity is the also second largest in the world. Iran is desperately trying to sell the energy resources in international market but with very little success due to the sanctions imposed by the international community. In

this regard Pakistan and India are also very keen to enhance trade with Iran to import gas and oil from Iran. But currently they are waiting for the solution of Iran's nuclear issue which is being negotiated between US and Iran.(Fani, 2005)

During the year of 1999, Pakistan president visited Iran and re-examined the IPI project and showed willingness to accept the proposal. In 2000, all member countries showed their extreme interest in this project. In March 2000, secretary of petroleum of Pakistan visited Iran for the final concurrence of project. (Barzegar, 2008)In this regard, Iranian government official visited Pakistan for signing the final agreement. It is very beneficiary project therefore it remained dominant for a long period that is a period up to 15 years. It was such astonishing news when in June 2010 Pakistan and Iran government's official agreed to construct the gas pipeline without including India.(Tehsin, 2014)

As far as construction of pipeline is concerned, it is very necessary to study the ways adopted by European countries for the construction of gas pipelines. All member states of south Asia agreed to work on the approach of segmented construction. According to this approach, every member country will construct the part of the pipeline which is coming in its own territory. Iran has almost done its part that is construction of 1115 km pipeline from Asalouyeh to the border of Pakistan. Now Pakistan has to construct 898 km of the part of its territory, after which it will enter to India. India will further extend it by working a length of 740 km. Due to bad given image of Iran in the world community; the financial issues are more dominant which must be kept in mind. Iran was imposed with sanctions a lot of time. Recent 4th round sanctions in June 2010 were imposed due to its unclear nuclear ambitions. (Policy, 2005)

China a New Partner in Gas Pipe Line

Post Iran revolution in 1979 the US and the West encircled Iran politically, economically, diplomatically, and militarily. Iran continues attempts to remove its sanctions unilaterally by signing different projects with the regional powers but the US again the main hurdle in its path to development. Iran-Pakistan and India Gas pipe line was also the victim of this international pressure. Both Pakistan and India deal by the US to withdraw from this mega economic project by using soft diplomacy for India and hard diplomacy against Pakistan. Pursuing its new economic Maritime Silk Rout and Pak-China economic corridor policy China enter into gas pipe line project by replacing India. Chinese will invest two billion US \$ by connecting this pipe line with Gawadar port that will not only benefit China but also Pakistan and Iran who lost the hope of completion of the project. (Desk, 2015)

Conclusion

Iran and Pakistan are two neighboring states connected by Islamic norms and values but abstracted by some issues including the interpretation of Islamic Law, ethnic issues, regional and international interests. Both had very friendly relations since the birth of Pakistan but the Islamic revolution of 1979 sparked a break in their gracious relation when Pakistan joined the US block against the USSR and Iran put an end to the US exploitation by overthrowing the rule of Shah of Iran. Both the states strengthened their hostile relation on the issue of Taliban who were supported by Pakistan and had clashed with the Iranian interests who were supported Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Those were not the only bone of contention between Iran and Pakistan as the issue of Shaite sect emerged in Pakistan and threatened the security of Pakistan who got support from Iran.

The US presence in Afghanistan post 9/11 brought both states to common interests as both of them considered as a threat to their security. With the elimination of Taliban from Afghanistan both states relations were also cold down and started a new era of normalization. Post 9/11 Pakistan had no option but support US in its war on terror while Iran again declared as the Axis of evil during the Bush era. Like Pakistan, Iran also offered its support to US but the US was more interested in Pakistan. Pakistan contributed a lot to the war on terror but the US and Western media blamed Pakistan role as a destructive rather than constructive in Afghanistan.

The US and Iran realized the need to come with formula on its divergent issues including, Iran Nuclear Issue, Afghanistan crises post US draw down and human rights. Pakistan welcomed the negotiation but it will again lead to clash of interests in Afghanistan because both Iran and the US do not wants the hold of Taliban in Afghanistan. Apart from Afghanistan factor Pakistan improved its relations with Tehran in Political, economical, social, security and militarily. To complete its Pipe line project after the Indian withdrawn Pakistan successful attempts made possible to include China as a new partner in the project. With the new developments in Middle East crises of Yemen, Pakistan passed a rational resolution from its Parliament by in involvement in the internal affairs of the region keeping in mind the Iran factor. Pakistan honored the Iranian foreign minister visit to Islamabad in April 2015.

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