

In the name of Allah

National Interests and Trans-national Responsibilities in Pakistan-Iran Relations

Relations between Pakistan and Iran, in all aspects, may be analyzed in different ways. Various theories and models can be used to describe the Whys and Hows of the Pak-Iran relations. One of the criterias in this field, can be the relation between national interests and trans-national responsibilities.

According to the hypothesis of this article , the political, social and economic relations of Pakistan and The Islamic Republic of Iran can be understood by two key words: national interests and trans-national responsibilities. Pakistan's foreign policy is mainly considered according to her national interest, while the I.R.I *tries* to make a synthesis of national interests and trans-national responsibilities.'

The principal difference between foreign policy of the two countries is that the Islamic Republic of Iran considers some kinds of responsibilities abroad based on her duties. To test this idea- after explaining the concepts- some cases will be discussed.

\. "tries" in the above sentence refers to the Iran's attempt to do so, without any judgment if it is successful or not.

Realism in I.R / National interests

National interest is defined as the goals and aims of a nation which should be followed realistically. Because there is no single “interest”, we can use it as plural: ”interests”. As Plano and Olton define:

“National interest is the fundamental objective and ultimate determinant that guides the decision-makers of a state in making foreign policy. The national interest of a state is typically a highly generalized conception of those elements that constitute the state’s most vital needs. These include self-preservation, independence, territorial integrity, military security, and economic well-being.”¹

There are a lot of different, and sometimes opposite, definitions of this term, but the definition in this article is based on power-politics and realism in international relations. Iain McLean refers to two different conceptions of this term:

“ National interest is the interest of a state, usually as defined by its government .Two broad usages may be identified:

- 1) Use by politicians in seeking support for a particular course of action, especially in foreign policy. In foreign policy, the term invokes an image of the nation, or nation-state, defining its

¹ Jack C. Plano.(and Roy Olton).*The International Relations Dictionary.*(U.S.A: Longman, 1988) pp10-11.

interests within the anarchic international system where dangers abound and interests of the nation are always at risk.

- ۲) Use as a tool for analyzing foreign policy, particularly by political realists, such as Hans Morgenthau. Here national interest is used as a sort of foreign policy version of term “public interest” – indicating what is best for the nation in its relations with other states.”^{۱)}

Comparing those two meanings, we can conclude that the first is more general than the second. As McLean indicates, the second use of that term emphasizes not merely the threat to the nation from the international anarchy, but also the external constraints such as the interests and power of other states, and the other factors beyond the control of the nation like geographical location and dependence on foreign trade. The realists’ use of the term national interest in evaluating foreign policy has focused on national security as the core of national interest. “interest of state” and “national security of state” are closely allied terms.^{۲)}

But what are the national interests of a state? And how can we recognize the national interests of one state from another?

It is necessary to notice that there is no agreed methodology by which the best interests of a nation can be tested. In fact there are two different ideas to determine them. Some writers have argued that the best interests are, nevertheless, objectively determined by the situation of the state within the

۱. Iain Mclean . *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*. (U.K: Oxford University Press, ۱۹۹۶) pp ۳۳۲-۳.

۲. *Ibid*. p ۳۳۳.

international system and can be deduced from a study of history and the success/ failure of policies. According to others, national interest is subjectively interpreted by the government of the day. In this version, it is merely what the politicians say in this regard.^۱

Idealism in I.R / Trans-national responsibilities

Trans-national responsibilities can be defined as the responsibilities that an Ideological state pursues out of the nation-state borders. These kinds of countries do it as a duty.^۲

This criteria differentiates between secular states and ideological ones. According to secularism, religion and state must be divided. So duties and responsibilities rooted in religion do not confine the frameworks of foreign policy. In an Islamic state, however, the conducts of the government and its nation – if not all aspects, at least the guidelines- are defined by religion. A country which does not act completely according to religion may be a non-religious one, or just so-called religious.

The concept of “trans-national responsibilities” is more general than the concept of “religious states”. So there are some kind of non-religious states which consider trans-national responsibilities abroad for themselves. Marxist states like the Soviet Union used to act according to the duties elaborated in their school of thought.

The main difference between religious and Marxist states in one side, and secular states in the other, is that for the first group “duty” is more important than “national interest”. So they may take some positions in their foreign

۱. see: *Ibid.*

۲. Seyed Sadegh Haghghat. *Trans-national Responsibilities in Foreign Policy of Islamic Government* (Tehran: Presidency Strategic Research Center, ۱۹۹۷) pp ۲۳-۲۸.

policy, whether their interest is for or against it. It is the reason that we have chosen the term “trans-national” instead of “international”.

Borrowing from Max Weber, we can recognize “national interests’ and “trans-national responsibilities” as two different *ideal types*. Consequently, there is no pure concept of them in practice. so some states in order to synthesize new concepts, try to combine them. Surely, the new synthesized concept will be some thing else. It is true for the I.R.I’s foreign policy after the Islamic Revolution, and it is one of the main reasons that make it difficult to understand.

In spite of secular states, ideological states establish their foreign policy idealistically. According to Plano and Olton:

“The idealist approach believes that foreign policies based on moral principles are more effective, because they promote unity and cooperation among states rather than competition and conflict. According to the idealist, moral power is more effective than physical power.”^۱

Islam and Tran-national Responsibilities

Religious states consider all Muslims as one community, referring to the Holy Quran:

“ان هذه امتكم امة واحدة و انا ربكم فاعبدون”^۲

Surely this Islam is your religion, one religion

۱. Plano. *Ibid.* p ۷.

۲ سورة انبياء: ۹۲

(only), and I am your Lord, therefore serve me.”

The ١١th article of the I.R.I's Constitution refers to that verse of the Holy Quran, and concludes that the Islamic state's "duty" is to unite Muslims in political, economic and cultural aspects. As a result , we can say that it is an obligation for the Islamic state, not a "right". Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) says:

" من سمع رجلا ينادي يا للمسلمين فلم يجبه فليس بمسلم "

“ If you hear a man calling all other Muslims, and you do not help him, you won't be a real Muslim.”

A secular state may believe in these creeds, but not as the duty of the state. In this state the rights and duties of the individuals and the state are differentiated.

Elaborating the mentioned concepts, we can adjust the hypothesis of this article on the relations of Pakistan and Iran (after the Islamic Revolution). It seems obvious that different aspects of the relation between the two countries is very vast, and we just refer to it as the national interest or trans-national responsibilities.

Cultural Relations of Iran and Pakistan

Some researchers see the roots of common cultural heritage of Pakistan and Iran in one thousand years ago, although the recent cultural exchanges between Pakistan and Iran date back to March ١٩٥٦ when the two countries concluded a Cultural Agreement. Under this agreement, several cultural

^١ الاصول الكافي، ج٢ ص١٦٤

exchange programmes were signed, last one being for the period ۱۹۹۹-۲۰۰۳.

Iran in the Shah' era attached particular importance to the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), a tri-partite social and economic alliance linking Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. RCD which came into being on July ۲۱, ۱۹۶۴, following a summit conference held in Istanbul by the three respective Heads of State.

RCD resulted in the creation of a number of joint-venture industrial enterprises, while in social and cultural fields there were exchanges of scholars, journalists, sportsmen and youth organizations, for the purpose of acquainting the people of the three countries with their common cultural and social ties. Following a summit meeting in ۱۹۷۶ aimed at developing economic links between the three members.

The historical, cultural and religious ties of Pakistan with Iran and Turkey which have been reinforced by their partnership first in the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), shows itself in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) now. Iran is an important strategic neighbour of Pakistan and a partner in regional peace and security.

Pakistan sees Iran as an important neighbour that has geo-strategic location and with which people of Pakistan share common faith and history. Iran, therefore, is a key element in Pakistan's foreign policy. Strong cultural relations of the two countries roots in deep common traditions, religion and also similar problems.

Economic Relations of Iran and Pakistan

Cooperation between Pakistan and Iran in various areas like Trade and Commerce, Science and technology, Defence, Tourism, Communications, Oil and Gas, etc has been improving steadily. Pakistan-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC) has held Eleven sessions so far. Dates for the next session are presently under consideration. ECO and D-8 also provided us additional avenues to further bolster our relations in various walks of life. However this cooperation is far below its potential and needs concerted efforts both of the Governments of the two countries and of the private sector to enhance it to a desirable level. Pakistan's Trade with Iran in 1999-

2000 was :

Exports: US\$11,480 million

Imports: US\$130,277 million.

Major exports of Pakistan to Iran include Rice, Yarn, Synthetic Fibres, Paper and Paperboard, etc. Pakistan on the other hand, imports Petroleum and Petroleum Products, Fruits, Vegetables, Ores and Concentrates of Iron & Steel and Raw Cotton from Iran. The balance of trade, as may be seen above, remains heavily tilted in Iran's favour. Iran can help reduce trade gap by importing rice, wheat, yarn, paper, surgical goods, sports goods and toys from Pakistan. ¹

Pak-Iran economic relations are governed by Pakistan-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC), which was established in 1987. It provides a useful institutional framework in the identification of areas to promote economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries. It also periodically reviews and monitors the implementation of various decisions taken in this regard by the representatives of the two countries.

¹.ibid

The 11th session of the Pak-Iran Joint Economic Commission was held in Islamabad in March 1999. The Coordinators of Pakistan-Iran JEC met in Islamabad on April 26-28, 2000 to review implementation of the decisions taken during the 11th Session. The main criteria in the bilateral economic relations- like other countries- seems to be “national interest”. Each state try to export more than its importance.

Political Relations of Iran and Pakistan

Diplomatic relations between Iran and Pakistan established in August 1947. Iran was a founding member of CENTO, a defensive alliance between Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, with Britain as a non-regional member and the United States in association. With the easing of the international tensions that led to its formation, CENTO became an important force for non-military regional cooperation, particularly in the field of manpower training and communications.

Victory of the Islamic Revolution was the main cause for the collapse of CENTO. Despite her interests, this was one of the main trans-national responsibilities of the Islamic Iran against the U.S. In reference to the current Iranian Constitution and Iran's foreign policy conduct over the last two decades, the objectives may be divided into three areas:

- a) Economic growth and development, preserving territorial integrity and national sovereignty;
- b) Upholding the rights of Muslims and defending liberation movements, on the one hand, and confrontation with Israel and the West (notably the United

States);

c) Establishment of an Islamic polity based on Shi'i principles.

To achieve its three levels of objectives found in the Constitution, the Islamic Republic of Iran needs coalition and alliance.

The historical perspective of Pakistan's foreign policy falls in five broad phases. The first period covers the time from the UN enforced cease-fire of ۱۹۴۹ to the ۱۹۶۵ war over Kashmir. During this period Pakistan allied itself with the West by joining the Baghdad Pact and its successor, CENTO, and SEATO. The primary motivation underlying our membership of these alliances had been the need to redress our defence vulnerability and achieve a reasonable military equilibrium with India.

The second phase runs from ۱۹۶۵ to the ۱۹۷۱ crisis in East Pakistan. The ۱۹۶۵ war, which was sparked by the Jammu and Kashmir issue, had led to a drastic reduction in economic and military assistance to Pakistan. The increase in defence expenditure together with the decline in foreign assistance compounded economic difficulties and aggravated political problems led by a sense of alienation in East Pakistan. India played on this crisis and eventually imposed war on Pakistan.

During the third phase from ۱۹۷۱ to ۱۹۸۹ Pakistan remained engaged in rebuilding itself and facing the challenge of the Soviet military intervention in neighbouring Afghanistan, which lasted for over a decade since ۱۹۷۹, and has spawned a conflict that continues to ravage Afghanistan.

The fourth phase covers the period from ۱۹۹۰ to the nuclear tests of May ۱۹۹۸. Two important events from the security perspective took place in ۱۹۹۰. USA clamped economic and military sanctions on Pakistan under the Pressler Amendment (which widened the conventional gap between India and Pakistan). That same year the intensification of the freedom movement

in occupied Kashmir led to the massive deployment of Indian troops in occupied Kashmir.

The last two years, the current phase, have witnessed important developments in Pakistan's foreign policy. These include: the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif's initiative to resume bilateral dialogue with India soon after taking office, the nuclear tests that radically altered the security environment of South Asia last year, the security dialogue with the United States and the crisis in Kargil. These developments, together with the continuing conflict in Afghanistan, represent the major preoccupations of Pakistan's policy makers. Meanwhile, trade and economy have acquired increasing importance in our foreign relations. ¹

As the developments in the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan indicate, there is no denying the fact that Pakistan played and is still playing an important role in the Afghan imbroglio. Now it is public knowledge that the Taliban had neither the capacity nor the wherewithall to capture Kabul on September 26-27, 1996 by itself. Like in the Jalalabad offensive of 1995, Pakistan reservist troops went into action from three sides of Kabul on September 26, 1996 night, and completed their job before sunrise of September 27, 1996.

It is generally accepted by Afghan watchers that Pakistan's Afghan policy is always being authored by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Agency and the Interior Ministry.

The shifts and vacillations on the political front made the Afghan Mujahideen, and Taliban, come closer to the ISI, a constant factor, wielding considerable influence in Pakistani politics. Apparently the various Afghan

¹.ibid.

factions that sought help from Pakistan perceived that the ISI could provide some continuity and protect their interests, as compared to the political leadership.⁷

Whatever may be the truth, Islamabad's policy towards Afghanistan since the fall of Kabul- based on the national interest- has not produced the desired results based on national interest. As The Foreign Ministry of Pakistan declares, the overriding objective of Pakistan's foreign policy is the safeguarding of its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity. This is underpinned by its firm adherence to immutable principles of interstate relations. The quest for security has been at the heart of Pakistan's foreign policy since independence.⁸

Pakistan's security environment derives its origins from the circumstances in which Pakistan was created. Currently, the key foreign policy objectives of Pakistan include:

- strengthening the security and preservation of the territorial integrity of Pakistan,
- a just settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute,
- preservation of our nuclear deterrence which is essential for our security,
- development, economic growth and promotion of our economic and commercial interests abroad.
- promotion of Pakistan's image as a strong, dynamic and progressive state,

⁷.-Sreedhar, Senior Fellow, IDSA. "**Pakistan's Afghan Policy at the Cross-Roads**". **Google .com.**

⁸. "Pakistan's Foreign Policy". Google. Com.

- close friendship and cooperation with the Islamic world,
- strong friendly cooperation with China,
- mutually beneficial and strong ties with all major powers, especially the United States,
- durable peace and stability in Afghanistan,
- promotion of nuclear non-proliferation objectives and
- combatting international terrorism, crime and drug trafficking,
- promotion of the interests and welfare of the overseas Pakistanis.

The guiding principles of Pakistan's foreign policy are based on the internationally recognized norms of inter-state relations which include:

- the sovereign equality of all states,
- non-interference in the internal affairs of other states,
- respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, and
- non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes. °

During this period, Pakistan also coordinated closely with neighbouring Iran with which it launched a joint mission to promote an Afghan peace process in June- July ۱۹۹۸. The Foreign Secretary accordingly visited Tehran in the first week of January ۱۹۹۹ for bilateral consultations with his Iranian counterpart; during his visit he was also received by the Foreign Minister and the President.

The first regional meeting of the six plus two (Pakistan, Iran, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United States and Russia) was held in Tashkent on ۱۹-۲۰ July, ۱۹۹۹ providing an opportunity for the

۱. ibid.

representatives of the Taliban and the United Front to sit together at the negotiating table. The Tashkent talks were important for bringing the two sides together on the same platform, and for keeping the 6 + 2 process alive.

Pakistan remains committed to working with the UN, the OIC, Afghanistan's neighbours, and the Afghan parties, to restore and promote peace in the war-torn country.

Although Pakistan and Iran have difference of opinion over Afghanistan, the two countries have similar interests in Afghanistan viz. cessation of hostilities, preservation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and return of millions of refugees to their homeland. Pakistan and Iran officially have good relations, in terms of mutual participation to ECO, regular bilateral high-level meetings, etc. But in fact both appeared as competitors in Central Asia, as far as oil and Islam are concerned. ¹

Different policies of the two countries can be understood by two key words: national interest and tran-national responsibilities. Pakistan's foreign policy is based on national interest – without considerable difference between Mosharaf's and the previous leaders-, while the Iran's one is related to an ambiguity of national interest and trans-national responsibilities. Pakistan's support of Taliban at its emergence and cooperating with the U.S in demolishing it can be realized by her national interest and security.

On the other hand, Iranian's foreign policy is not obvious. According to professor Sariolghalam:

“ Iranian foreign policy practitioners have constantly faced with the problem and the dilemma of coalition in resolving foreign disputes and/or in more extensive cooperation and coordination. Iran's

¹.Olivier Roy. "The Iranian foreign policy toward Central Asia". Google.com.

cultural, geographical and economic particularities determine to a great deal the orientation and type of foreign transnational coalitions and formulations.

There is a degree of tension in Iran's foreign relations with all of its neighboring countries.

Perhaps the main reason is because of the uniqueness of the Islamic Republic of Iran's political system being in disharmony and incompatibility with the mainstream international trends. This disharmony is not necessarily negative but it is merely unique and different. Its continuation is also not cost free. It is within this system of paradoxes and contradictions that the Islamic Republic of Iran is trying to pursue its goals both at the internal as well as the external environments.²⁹

Conclusion

In this article, relation between national interest and trans-national responsibilities is defined as one of the keys determines the differences and similarities of the two nation's foreign policy.

As a result, we can adjust this hypothesis on the mentioned case:

1. The Pak-Iran cultural relations roots in their deep and common traditions and religion, not merely in their realistic and beneficial interests.

29. Mahmood Sariolghalam. "The Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: A Theoretical Renewal and a Paradigm for Coalition [Part I]" *Discourse (Quarterly)* Winter 2002, Vol. 3, No. 3

۲. The bilateral economic relations of the two countries engages their national interest.
۳. Pakistan's political conduct is msinly based on her national interest, while Iran's one is some thing between national interest and trans-national responsibilities.

Pakistan-Iran close relations are a source of strength not only for both the countries but also for the region.