



Institute of Regional Studies

Policy Paper

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Managing Pak- Iran Relations in context of Iran-US rivalry and tensions in the Middle East

Executive Summary

The paper is written while considering the framework of warm bilateral relations between Iran and Pakistan which have been tested on several accounts such as sectarian tension, sanctions on Iran, civil war in Afghanistan, Pakistan's ties with Saudi Arabia and U.S. influence on Pakistan. During the course of this paper, the challenges for Pakistan-directly or indirectly influencing Iran- Pakistan relations are deliberately analyzed. These generally include Iran's support to militia groups for ethnic divides and proxy wars in the region, Iran's misperception that Pakistan supports Sunni militant organizations, Iran's provision of land to India in the form of Chabahar Port which poses a major security risk for Pakistan and so on. Some common challenges like immense Saudi influence on Pakistan, U.S. pressure on Pakistan, prolong U.S presence in Afghanistan, threat of ISIS and CRIP regional alignment versus QUAD are also investigated in detail. It is observed that Pakistan and Iran fully realize the importance of each other in the region and are striving to serious efforts to overcome persistent irritants for stronger bilateral relations. Both sides are committed to exploring areas of mutual economic interests including gas pipeline projects and trade. The negotiations and agreements that are currently in progress reveal the strong sense of determination from both sides to move forward. Consequently, it would be a pragmatic approach to progress relations with Iran keeping into consideration the strategic importance of the country for Pakistan's security as well as economy. At the same time, it would be rational to maintain relations with other countries keeping in view the geopolitical realities. After thorough study of the bilateral ties and associated challenges, the paper has determined the possible opportunities.