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Pakistan

Pakistan Iran border attacks: in historic perspectives

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After an air strike by Pakistani air force on 18th January inside Iranian bordering town killed at least 9 in retaliation to 16 January missiles attack on the border town of Balochistan that killed two kids among others, both Pakistani and Iranian governments agreed to de-escalate the war threat and re-establish a full fledged diplomatic relationship.

For the time being, there is a complete lull at present on 20th January, as both countries seem taken revenge from their “enemies” taking refuge in each other country. Both have been able to kill some of those claimed by them as terrorist groups, the Jaish al Adl (army of justice) in Pakistan and the Baloch separatist in Iran.

Iran claimed that they targeted two bases of the Jaish al Adl armed group in Pakistan. The group had claimed responsibility for a police station attack on Iranian town of Rask in the Southern border province of Sistan-Baluchistan which killed 11 Iranian security personnel. The attack was condemned by Pakistan.

Whosoever attacks each other, the Baloch people are the target on both sides. Some fighting the “Pakistan atrocities” and others fighting the Iranian colonial occupation of part of Balochistan. After the First World War, the Western Balochistan was gifted to Iran by British Imperialism.

Pakistani attack on “Balochistan separatist camps” in Iran took place at a time when many hundreds of Baloch activists are camping in Islamabad to recover missing Baloch activists and stop extrajudicial killings. They came to Islamabad from Turbat district of Balochistan in a long march that caught the attention of many internationally.

The escalation of border tension turning into missile attacks inside Pakistan and Iran has to be seen in the background of Israel’s genocide of Palestinians. This has been the first time that there was an air strike and missile attack by Pakistan inside IRAN. The American imperialism would be very happy if Iran is kept busy defending from the attacks of Pakistan instead of helping the Palestinians though mainly through proxy organizations.

There is a long history of conflict between the two countries. There was a guerilla war in Balochistan during the first Bhutto government. This took place after an elected provincial government of National Awami Party (NAP) in opposition to Pakistan People’s Party federal government was overthrown by Bhutto at the instigation of Shah of Iran in 1973. Many Baloch youths went into the mountains to fight back and many migrated to Afghanistan and Iran.

During this decade, Iran tried to bring in other tribes into the neighbouring province of Sestan-Baluchestan to change the majority of Baloch people into minority, same as Israel did with Palestinians.

The Shah of Iran was so terrified with the growing resistance of Baloch inside Iran that he asked Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to take action against the provincial government of NAP. Bhutto did this brutally to crush the Baloch resistance with the help of army operation inside Balochistan. Shah of Iran was afraid of the fact that if Eastern Balochistan becomes independent, the Western Balochistan inside the Iranian territory would become part of it. Baloch were targeted since then on both sides, but the resistance in many forms continues till today.

Both countries blame each other for harbouring the “terrorists” in their countries, the religious groups in Pakistan and nationalist groups in Iran.

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If the war escalates, which seems not the case at present, it would damage both countries' economies to a level never seen before. The oil supplies to Pakistan can be hit hard by Iranians. The trade between the two countries would be halted. Already Iran benefits the "smuggling" of Iranian oil in bulk into Pakistan at present.

It is important to note that trade activities between Pakistan and Iran continued as usual, as both countries kept all their crossing points open despite the airspace violation by Iranian forces and the subsequent retaliatory strike by Pakistani forces. Trade activities are continuing along the border towns including Taftan, Gwader, Kech, Panjgor and Washuk.

Earlier in August 2023, the foreign ministers of both countries met in Islamabad to formulate a trade for a five-year trade plan aiming to achieve a trade goal of \$5 billion.

The threat of a full fledged war is over at present, it seems, as both the foreign ministers of Iran and Pakistan have spoken to each other and emphasized "brotherly" relation. This is just an interval between the two so-called brother Islamic countries, who are waiting a better time to strike again once their internal crisis escalates.

The women's movement against the Islamic Republic of Iran in recent years, and the long march of Baloch activists in Pakistan, are the real hope for progressive movements in both countries and internationally. The kidnappings and murders of Baluchis by both the Pakistani and Iranian governments must stop.

January 20, 2024

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