

The Role of Jaish Al-Adl Group in the Escalation of Conflict on the Iran-Pakistan Border

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Abstract

Jaish Al-Adl is an ethnic Baloch Sunni Muslim militant group that has played a significant role in the escalation of conflict on the Iran-Pakistan border. Jaish Al-Adl was founded in 2012 and is largely composed of members of the Sunni Jundullah militia that was weakened after Iran captured the majority of its members. Jaish Al-Adl wants to liberate Sistan province in eastern Iran and Balochistan province in southwestern Pakistan. This paper will elaborate on the relationship between Iran and Pakistan, especially in the context of borders by using a qualitative approach that utilizes various secondary data that has a correlation with the role of Jaish Al-Adl in worsening relations between Iran and Pakistan. By using descriptive type, this paper will explain the situation and empirical facts accompanied by relevant arguments and show Jaish Al-Adl's controversial activities, so that Jaish Al-Adl is labeled as a militant group that further worsens relations between Iran and Pakistan.

Keywords: *Jaish Al-Adl, Iran, Pakistan, Border, Baloch*

Abstrak

Jaish Al-Adl merupakan kelompok militan Muslim Sunni Baloch yang memiliki peran penting dalam eskalasi konflik di perbatasan Iran-Pakistan. Jaish Al-Adl didirikan pada tahun 2012 dan sebagian besar terdiri dari anggota milisi Sunni Jundullah yang melemah setelah Iran menangkap sebagian besar anggotanya. Jaish Al-Adl ingin membebaskan provinsi Sistan di Iran timur dan provinsi Balochistan di Pakistan barat daya. Tulisan ini akan menguraikan hubungan antara Iran dan Pakistan, khususnya dalam konteks perbatasan dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang memanfaatkan berbagai data sekunder yang memiliki korelasi dengan peran Jaish Al-Adl dalam memperburuk hubungan antara Iran dan Pakistan. Dengan menggunakan tipe deskriptif, tulisan ini akan menjelaskan situasi dan fakta empiris disertai dengan argumen yang relevan serta menunjukkan aktivitas Jaish Al-Adl yang kontroversial, sehingga Jaish Al-Adl dicap sebagai kelompok militan yang semakin memperburuk hubungan antara Iran dan Pakistan.

Kata kunci: *Jaish Al-Adl, Iran, Pakistan, Perbatasan, Baloch*

INTRODUCTION

The conflict and tension between Iran and Pakistan is one of the complex geopolitical dynamics in the South and East Asia regions. Iran and Pakistan are known to have a long history where the two countries share a border of approximately 900 km which is also known as the Goldsmith Line stretching for approximately 900 km. About nine million ethnic Baloch people inhabit both sides of the border, living in Pakistan's Balochistan province, Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province and neighboring areas in Afghanistan. The border between these two countries has become a hot spot due to militant activity and smuggling. Relations between Iran and Pakistan began to

deteriorate since the Iranian revolution in 1979 which was marked by the transition of Iran's government to Shia, which began to create significant differences in terms of sectarianism and foreign policy with Pakistan, which is predominantly Sunni, thus starting to create divisive issues between the two countries. Even though the two of them are known to have established diplomatic relations in 1947, tensions between Iran and Pakistan continue to fluctuate, especially regarding border security issues. Incidents such as cross-border attacks, kidnapping, smuggling and even murder have fueled tensions in relations between the two (Waghmar, 2013).

In Iran there is a militant group called Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice) which is said to be a replacement for the separatist group Jundullah. The Jaish Al-Adl group has a central role in the escalation of the conflict on the Iran-Pakistan border. The Jaish Al-Adl group was founded in 2012 and the majority of its members come from the Sunni militant group Jundullah. Basically the Jaish Al-Adl group wants independence for the province of Sistan in eastern Iran and the province of Balochistan in southwest Pakistan. This aspiration is rooted in historical and cultural ties between the ethnic Baloch people, who inhabit both sides of the border. Ethnic Baloch make up the majority in these regions, but often feel marginalized and unrecognized by the central governments of Iran and Pakistan. The Baloch ethnic community feels that they do not have the same opportunities in terms of economic, political and social development compared to the majority groups in Iran and Pakistan (IISS, 2024). Therefore, the Jaish Al-Adl group wants to establish an independent state of Balochistan where the Baloch ethnic community can have autonomous power and preserve their culture and traditions.

In fact, it is not only Jaish Al-Adl that acts as a militant group in Iran, there is also the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) in Iran. Although these groups share the same goal of liberating the people of Balochistan, there is a difference between the BLF and BLA and Jaish Al-Adl. The BLA and BLF are part of a nationalist uprising, while Jaish Al-Adl is a jihadi organization fighting for the independence of Sistan-Balochistan province in eastern Iran and Balochistan province in southwestern Pakistan. It is said that the BLA and BLF only want to separate from Pakistan and establish an independent Balochistan, while Jaish Al-Adl is a Sunni jihadi militant group with a strong territorial view that not only aims to gain independence for Balochistan, but also to threaten the existence of the Shia Muslim revolutionary government in Iran (Bajpae, 2024).

Furthermore, the tendency of tension between Iran and Pakistan rose again on January 16, 2024, when Iran launched an attack towards the east of Pakistani territory precisely in the Balochistan region located in southwestern Pakistan which borders Iran. Iran intended the attack to suppress the Pakistan-based Jaish Al-Adl group. Pakistan confirmed the Iranian attack killed two people. Seeing this, two days later Pakistan responded by sending retaliatory airstrikes including missiles and fighter jets in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province, Pakistan also claimed that its strikes targeted the hideouts of anti-Pakistan ethno-nationalists BLA and BLF operating in Iran (Davison, 2024). The presence of Jaish al-Adl on the border of Iran and Pakistan is a significant trigger where Iran and Pakistan often suspect and blame each other for militant attacks

that occur in the border area. In Iran, Jaish al-Adl operates from Pakistan without law enforcement. Similarly, in Pakistan, attacks by insurgent groups in Balochistan Province using their hideouts in Iranian territory threaten national security. For example, Jaish al-Adl is said to be responsible for several attacks against Iran and Pakistan, one of the most notable being the attack on February 13, 2019 where Jaish al-Adl carried out a suicide bombing on a bus near the Iranian city of Zahedan carrying Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRCG) and killed 27 people and injured 13 others (Karim 2023).

Therefore, clarity is needed in studying the border security issue between Iran and Pakistan because this problem does not only involve two countries but also external actors such as Jaish Al-Adl who have contributed to worsening relations between Iran and Pakistan. Furthermore, this paper will try to review several things related to Iran and Pakistan, starting from the conceptualization of Iran and Pakistan relations in the past and present, then how the profile and role of the Jaish Al-Adl group in worsening relations between Iran and Pakistan.

METHOD

In analyzing the escalation of the conflict between Iran and Pakistan which is also related to the Jaish Al-Adl group, this article seeks to describe the facts and phenomena related to the border of Iran and Pakistan which includes geographic and demographic conditions on the border as well as the identity and conditions of the people living on the border, then the position, role, and interests of the Jaish Al-Adl group on the border of Iran and Pakistan will also be discussed. The writing of this article will use a qualitative method that is suitable to be presented in words. The type of data used in this article is qualitative, namely data presented in verbal form with various data sources taken from various secondary data such as books, journals, websites, and news portals. This paper is descriptive-analytical in nature that explains the situation and empirical facts accompanied by relevant arguments, this aims to produce research that provides a comprehensive and analytical explanation. The discussion of this paper is carried out through a critical analysis that conceptualizes the relationship between Iran and Pakistan on the border and Jaish Al-Adl as one of the causes of tension between the two and several other factors. The data analysis technique used is qualitative by applying an inductive approach in analysis, the problem will be described and explained based on data and correlation of existing facts with each other and then arranged systematically which leads to fundamental statements so that conclusions can be drawn.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of Iran and Pakistan Relations

The relationship between Iran and Pakistan has evolved over time and is influenced by a number of factors, including the security, political and economic interests of both countries. Both Iran and Pakistan have conflicting strategic interests, especially regarding Middle East politics in general. Both also have different national security

outlooks, which makes it difficult for them to develop strong political relationships with regional actors that share their strategic outlook. In addition, factors such as geopolitical differences, security agreements with other countries (such as Iran with India and Pakistan with Saudi Arabia), as well as attempts to politicize the Shia community in Pakistan have led to distrust between the two countries.

In the beginning, Iran and Pakistan were allies during the regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi with similar political perspectives in a political bloc led by the United States. The two countries at that time still had similar political views and supported each other on various issues, including as members of the Baghdad Pact and in the face of threats from the Soviet Union. But in 1979, when the Islamic Revolution in Iran changed the system of government from a monarchy to an Islamic republic, Iran's national identity underwent a radical transformation and engendered a political vision that was fundamentally confrontational. The revolution was led by a Shia cleric named Ayatollah Khomeini. Shia became the dominant sect by developing a system of government based on the teachings of Shia Islam (Khalaji, 2014). Due to differences in geopolitical interests and alignment, the relationship between the two countries became strained, especially since the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the two parties have been supporting different groups, and bilateral relations have not been cordial due to Pakistan's continued support for the Taliban regime, which is also opposed to the Afghan Shia sect and involved in the assassination of Iranian diplomats. In addition, Pakistan also drew closer to Saudi Arabia and supported the Sunni school of Islam. At that time Pakistan saw itself as the only Muslim country allied to Saudi Arabia that possessed nuclear weapons so Pakistan played an important role including in protecting religious sites in Saudi Arabia. In return, Pakistan received oil imports from Saudi Arabia (Khan, 2010). Meanwhile, Iran has actually strengthened its relationship with India, which is a rival of Pakistan. Iran's security deal with India, alongside Pakistan's strong relationship with Saudi Arabia, has further contributed to making the relationship complicated (Basit, 2018). Growing security threats across the border from anti-Pakistan insurgents, the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) as well as anti-Iran insurgents, Jaish Al-Adl, have complicated relations between security agencies on both sides.

Ultimately, the relationship between Iran and Pakistan is conceptualized as a complex one influenced by conflicting strategic interests. Different national security outlooks and geopolitical factors complicate the creation of a strong relationship between the two countries. Both Iran and Pakistan are aware of the consequences of strained relations that could lead to conflict escalation, especially in border areas.

Iran and Pakistan Border Problems in Regional Security

The border between Iran and Pakistan has long been the epicenter of many geopolitical and security issues affecting both countries. Iran and Pakistan share a border of approximately 900 km, which is largely lawless. In the region, ethnic and political dynamics are particularly complex as ethnic Baloch populations on both sides of the border feel alienated by their respective national governments of Balochistan Province, Pakistan and Sistan-Balochistan Province, Iran. The Baloch are an ethnic

group with a long history and rich cultural traditions. They originate from the Balochistan region, which covers southwestern Pakistan, northeastern Iran, and a small part of Afghanistan. The Baloch have their own language called Balochi, which is part of the Iranian language branch. The Baloch are majority Sunni Muslims who have a distinct ethnic, cultural and historical identity, and often feel marginalized or unrecognized by the central governments in Iran and Pakistan. It is not uncommon for ethnic Baloch communities to fall victim to Iranian and Pakistani airstrikes in cross-border shelling targeting militant groups such as Jaish Al-Adl. The Baloch region is rich in natural resources but there are economic disparities that make most of the Baloch population live below the poverty line, although the Pakistani government has claimed that there will be improvement efforts carried out in collaboration with China which provides investment to run belt and road projects but it seems that the people of Balochistan still feel lacking (Basit, 2018).

The situation and conditions on the border of Iran and Pakistan are the main point of tension between the two countries. This dynamic has made relations between the two countries difficult and distrustful. In Iran, the main concern in the border area with Pakistan is the activity of the Baloch separatist group Jaish Al-Adl. In Pakistan, the province of Balochistan is at the center of an insurgency by separatist organizations, these militant groups have been involved in a series of terrorist attacks against IRGC members and civilians. Iran often accuses Jaish Al-Adl of having sanctuaries across the border in Balochistan, Pakistan, where Iran believes that after each attack Jaish Al-Adl will cross back into Pakistan (Karim, 2024). In 2017, when Jaish Al-Adl killed and kidnapped Iranian border guards. The Iranian Army Chief threatened to attack Balochistan Province, Pakistan, where Jaish Al-Adl was hiding. The threat issued by Iran coincided with Pakistan's low-intensity conflict with India, as well as Pakistani security personnel clashing with the Afghan National Army in North Balochistan bordering Afghanistan which resulted in civilian casualties. The Iranian Army Chief's ultimatum angered Pakistani public opinion because it was perceived that Iran was not acting alone but was affiliated with the two countries to create tension on all Pakistani borders (Bengaluru, 2024). The Pakistani government expressed its protest by meeting the Pakistani envoy to discuss The Iranian Army Chief's statement, from which both sides decided to increase security in their respective border areas for mutual security. Based on The Iranian Army Chief's statement, it is suspected that Iran wants to convey a message to Pakistan that Iran will not tolerate cross-border militant activities and will take the path of confrontation in the future (Notezai, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary for Pakistan to strengthen border security and crack down on insurgent groups especially Jaish Al-Adl that are in conflict with Iran on its territory as cross-border activities and their impact on the security situation, particularly in the border provinces of Balochistan, Pakistan and Sistan-Baluchestan Iran have complicated relations between the two countries.

While the main issues in Pakistan are also related to the security domain, the province of Balochistan has been the epicenter of an insurgency by Baloch separatist organizations such as the BLF and BLA. These groups, along with sectarian organizations, engage in attacks targeting security forces and civilians, causing heavy

losses in casualties. In Balochistan, Pakistan also has to deal with sectarian organizations that remain active and target the Shia Hazara community. Pakistani authorities see this as a deliberate and orchestrated act by the Indian intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to destabilize law and order in Pakistan's Balochistan province. Therefore, Pakistan has to face two border problems at once with a high tendency. Security forces on the Pakistani side continue to face attacks by Baloch insurgent groups, allegedly based in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province. These cross-border attacks have intensified since the political changes in Afghanistan that resulted in the Taliban's takeover of the country in 2021. In a series of attacks earlier this year, more than twenty Pakistani security personnel were killed, and some Pakistani observers suggest that Pakistan has lost more than a hundred soldiers from 2020 to 2022 in attacks by Baloch insurgents (Mir, 2024). This has resulted in several counterinsurgency operations near the border and an understanding on Pakistan's part that the border with Iran needs to be defended militarily through restrictions, as diplomatic means have yielded little results.

Meanwhile, it is known that on January 16, 2024, Iran launched a series of missile and drone attacks on Pakistani territory with the claimed aim of attacking the Jaish Al-Adl group which it suspects is based in Balochistan Province, Pakistan. This attack came just a day after Iran also launched similar missile strikes in Erbil, Iraq and Syria, claiming to target the regional headquarters of the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad and several defense bases of terrorist groups in response to the Kerman bombing on January 3 for which the ISIS terrorist group claimed responsibility. Iran's missile attack on Pakistan targeting Jaish Al-Adl unfortunately left two children dead and four injured. The attack angered Pakistan so much that Pakistan withdrew its ambassador from Iran in protest of the violation of its sovereignty, both countries have a history of withdrawing diplomatic envoys, such as Pakistan withdrawing its ambassador from Iran in 2022 (Farda, 2024). It is confirmed that hours before Iran fired missiles into Balochistan, Pakistan's interim Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar had met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland. Pakistan's interim Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani met with Iran's special representative for Afghan affairs, Hassan Kazmi Qomi, where the two discussed the need for “enhanced coordination for regional stability”. Military and diplomatic engagement between Pakistan and Iran has actually increased in recent years, including joint naval exercises in the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz (Hardianto, 2024). However, violent incidents on their border continue to occur initiated by insurgent groups, such as Jaish al-Adl's recent attack on Iranian border guards, keeping Iran and Pakistan's tensions on the rise.

Controversial and Confrontational Jaish Al-Adl Group

Jaish al-Adl, which means the army of justice, is known as a Sunni militant group that emerged in 2012. The group is mainly composed of members of the Baluch community, who live on both sides of the Iran-Pakistan border. The group is considered a replacement for the militant group Jundullah after its strength weakened due to the arrest of many of its members including its leader Abdolmalek Rigi who

was arrested and executed in Iran. The group aims to seek independence for Sistan-Balochistan province in eastern Iran and Balochistan province in southwestern Pakistan. The group wants to advocate for the rights of the Baloch people who it says face discrimination by the governments of Iran and Pakistan. Members of the militant group are from the Baloch ethnic community and live on both sides of the border. In carrying out its operations, Jaish Al-Adl always crosses the border from Pakistan to Iran to carry out various attacks before returning to Pakistan (Tariq, 2024). However, Pakistan insists that the group has no organized presence in the province. However, Pakistan still recognizes that some militants may be hiding in remote areas of Balochistan, Pakistan's most sensitive region due to a long-standing insurgency. Therefore, it is this Jaish Al-Adl group that is said to be responsible for the increase in attacks by Iranian and Pakistani security forces in recent years and has led both countries to blame and distrust each other.

In some sources Jaish Al-Adl says that its existence is to protect the national and religious rights of the Baloch and Sunni people in Iran. Jaish Al-Adl also defines its goals as having the administration of Balochistan, forming an autonomous government, and restoring and defending the rights, existence, and culture of the oppressed people. Jaish Al-Adl also uses social media sites such as weblogs to make statements, announcements, claim attacks, and post propaganda videos. It is known that since February 2013, Jaish Al-Adl has been actively operating a twitter account and since October 2013 a youtube account. As of April 2017, Jaish Al-Adl has more than 38,500 followers on Twitter, and more than 1,200 subscribers on Youtube. In 2015, a Jaish Al-Adl spokesperson argued that they would end the Iranian regime's atrocities, oppression and crimes against national and religious minorities (Zahid, 2017). It was stated that Jaish Al-Adl will continue to carry out armed actions against Iran as long as the Baloch and Sunnis continue to suffer from discrimination and marginalization by the Iranian authorities. In an announcement made in 2015, Jaish Al-Adl emphasized that they have no other choice and will continue to resist until their goals are achieved and Iran grants sovereignty to the ethnic Baloch.

In January 2024, Iran attacked Pakistan using ballistic missiles and drones. This attack was carried out under the pretext of targeting the bases of the Jaish al-Adl militant group based in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan Province, which had attacked Iranian security forces several times in areas bordering Pakistan. This attack raised tensions in the Middle East region and triggered a reaction from Pakistan. Pakistan recalled the Iranian ambassador in protest and considered that the Iranian government had committed a blatant violation of its sovereignty. In addition, Pakistan also attacked the Saravan Sepah Pasdaran Army facility in Balochistan, Iran, in retaliation for the Iranian attack. This escalated the situation and sparked fears of further conflict in the region (Karim, 2024).

Previously, it was known that the Jaish Al-Adl group was responsible for many attacks that occurred mainly against Iran. Starting from 2014 where Jaish Al-Adl detonated a vehicle filled with explosives at the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRCG) base in Saravan

district, Sistan-Balochistan Province, Iran which killed one IRCG member and injured two others. In this attack Jaish Al-Adl demanded the dissolution of the IRCG. Still in 2014, Jaish Al-Adl also claimed responsibility for an attack on police personnel in Saravan city, Sistan-balochistan Province. At the time, Saravan's provincial security chief, General Hossein Rahimi, stated that Jaish Al-Adl armed forces called the police emergency line to lure the security forces. Afterward, three police officers who arrived were brutally murdered. The following year in April 2015, some Jaish Al-Adl members infiltrated from Pakistan to shoot at an Iranian border guard police patrol in Negur, Sistan-Balochistan killing eight border guards and three Jaish Al-Adl shooters. In April 2015, Jaish Al-Adl made another move by announcing that it had taken “foreign soldiers” from the IRCG hostage while they were on their way to the IRCG base in Nosratabad, Sistan-Balochistan. Not only that, Jaish Al-Adl even published photos of the hostages on their weblog with the message that Jaish Al-Adl would not allow Iran to use Balochistan and the areas where Jaish Al-Adl operates as locations for training and transferring foreign troops (Aljazeera, 2017).

Furthermore, Jaish Al-Adl claimed that many more attacks were initiated by their group. For example, on February 13, 2019 Jaish Al-Adl detonated a suicide car bomb against a foam carrying IRGC troops, killing 27 people and injuring 13 others near the Iranian city of Zehedan. February 4, 2022, in Sistan-Balochistan, Jaish Al-Adl again made controversial because they not only attacked IRGC forces but also attacked police stations, banks, and shops which resulted in killing 19 people and injuring at least 20. In December 2023, Jaish Al-Adl again admitted that it was responsible for a police station attack in the Iranian city of Rask in the southeastern border province of Sistan-Baluchistan that killed 11 security officers. With the many cases of attacks on the borders of Iran and Pakistan, it seems to foster tension between the two countries and often point fingers at each other. Such as the Jaish Al-Adl attack on April 26, 2017 on the border of Iran and Pakistan that killed ten Iranian border guards, Iranian police stated that the border guards were killed due to long-range weapons fire from inside Pakistan, based on this the Iranian government vocally stated that “The Pakistani government is fully responsible for the attack” (Aljazeera, 2024). On several other occasions such as in 2023 and 2021 Pakistan issued statements that “terrorists” from Iran were responsible for the deaths of Pakistani soldiers caused by cross-border shelling originating from Iran (Karim, 2023).

Thus, the presence of Jaish Al-Adl, which seeks the independence of the Baloch people on the border of Iran and Pakistan, has triggered tensions between the two countries. Jaish Al-Adl has continuously launched attacks against Iranian security forces while Pakistan also claims that Jaish Al-Adl has no organized presence in Pakistan's Balochistan Province. It is not uncommon for Iran to accuse Pakistan of providing protection to Jaish Al-Adl or even urge Pakistan to take decisive action including disbanding Jaish Al-Adl. Likewise, Pakistan, which also blames Iran for attacks on its territory, also accuses Iran of protecting Balochistan rebel groups. Therefore, due to the Jaish Al-Adl group, relations between Iran and Pakistan are characterized by mutual distrust and geopolitical rivalry.

CONCLUSION

The border issue between Iran and Pakistan is a complex geopolitical phenomenon. Iran and Pakistan used to be allies during the Shah's regime due to their shared political views and membership in the American-led political bloc during the Cold War. But after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, Iran's national identity underwent a radical change and gave birth to a confrontational political vision. These differences in outlook, geopolitical interests and alliances have strained relations between Iran and Pakistan. Iran's security deal with India, which is Pakistan's rival, and Pakistan's close relationship with Saudi Arabia, which is at odds with Iran, also made the dynamics of Iran and Pakistan's relations more complex. During this time, both Iran and Pakistan were aware of their different geopolitical interests but had not yet reached a point where they had to confront each other militarily.

In the midst of these complexities, the Jaish Al-Adl group emerged in 2012, which was predicted to replace the Jundullah group. The emergence of Jaish Al-Adl then played a central role in the high tension between Iran and Pakistan. Jaish Al-Adl is a Sunni militant group allegedly based in the border region of Iran and Pakistan, precisely in Balochistan Province, Pakistan. It is known that Jaish Al-Adl is very active in launching various attacks against Iran on the border precisely in Sistan-Balochistan Province, Iran. Jaish Al-Adl wants independence for Sistan province in eastern Iran and Balochistan province in southwestern Pakistan. According to Jaish Al-Adl, the Baloch ethnicity is neglected by Pakistan and marginalized by Iran, which is Shia in contrast to the Sunni Baloch people.

The presence of Jaish Al-Adl, which actively launches attacks on Iranian territory, has heated up relations between Iran and Pakistan. Iran accuses Pakistan of protecting the Jaish Al-Adl group because after launching attacks Jaish Al-Adl is always seen returning to Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan is adamant that Jaish Al-Adl has no organized presence in Balochistan, Pakistan. In fact, Iran has vocally mentioned several times that Pakistan is responsible for the attacks Iran has received. Thus, the relationship between Iran and Pakistan was characterized by mutual distrust and suspicion. Until last January 2024, Iran launched an attack on the Balochistan region of Pakistan on the grounds of the Jaish Al-Adl group that killed two people, this Iranian attack even took place when representatives of Iranian and Pakistani ministers were meeting at the World Economic Forum in Davos in Switzerland. A few days after the attack, Pakistan also launched an attack on Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province claiming that its attack targeted the hideouts of anti-Pakistan ethno-nationalists. This phenomenon has again raised tensions between Iran and Pakistan.

Based on these problems, both Iran and Pakistan should start a joint policy to share concerns regarding their border issues and the existence of the Jaish Al-Adl group openly, because when viewed broadly both Iran and Pakistan are equally disadvantaged by the presence of the Jaish Al-Adl group. Iran and Pakistan certainly do not want to give up their border areas inhabited by Baloch people for independence. So, rather than going it alone against militant and separatist groups, it would be better if Iran and Pakistan start building bilateral relations on a more

constructive and positive basis while reducing the impact of regional geopolitics that affect national security.

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