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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) inaugurates a factory rolling out glass bottles and jars during a visit to the western city of Zanjan on July 31, 2025.
● EHSAN TAQIBIGLOU/ISNA

Pezeshkian's visit to Pakistan Tehran, Islamabad aim to unlock dormant economic potential

By Nozar Shafiee
Subcontinent affairs analyst

O P I N I O N

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is set to arrive in Pakistan today for an official visit. The sheer size of Pakistan's population, its extensive territory, and its shared border with Iran dramatically reinforce the strategic weight of this trip. Equally important is the identity bond between the peoples of Iran and Pakistan—a shared cultural and historical heritage that continues to distinguish their relationship from Iran's ties with other neighbors, especially to the west and south.

Foreign opportunities and threats often stem first from neighboring states. For instance, Israel and the United States could not have carried out military actions against Iran in June—or at the very least, doing so would have been significantly costlier—if they lacked bases or influence in Iran's neighboring countries. This underscores why neighborhood policy matters; when a country reopens its diplomatic window, the first view is often its immediate neighbors. Pezeshkian's Pakistan visit is significant for exactly this reason. Economics also lies at the heart of this mission. Iran and Pakistan have dormant economic synergies that remain unexplored—and this visit aims to bring those to life.

During the 12-day aggression waged by Israel and the US, Pakistan was one of the few nations to affirm its support for Iran unequivocally. It stood in solidarity before many other states spoke up. What that support translates into in tangible terms—especially while the ceasefire remains provisional—could emerge clearly during this visit.

It is important to emphasize that while Pakistan enjoys cordial relations with the US, it does not recognize Israel—unlike Washington, which stands firmly with Tel Aviv. This distinction matters. Pakistan consistently defends Palestine in international forums and remains one of Israel's staunchest critics.

Moreover, Israel consistently aligns with India—Pakistan's rival. India accounts for roughly 40% of Israeli arms exports. This makes Israel—India's ally and Pakistan's rival—an indirect adversary of Islamabad. Ideologically, the Hindutva (Hindu nationalism in India) and Israeli Zionism view themselves as embattled "chosen nations" under siege by the Muslim world. This closes ranks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, placing them in the far-right political camp. In that light, Pakistan's foreign policy tilt toward Iran appears more courageous and straightforward, detached from US pressure.

Historically, Iran has supported Pakistan in all its conflict phases with India—directly during the Shah's era and indirectly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution—and even congratulated Pakistan on its nuclear tests. These precedents give Islamabad greater diplomatic latitude to back Iran credibly. Iran's support extends beyond executive endorsement; it permeates parliament, public opinion, and the armed forces. Multiple parliamentary resolutions in Pakistan have upheld Tehran, signaling deep bilateral closeness.

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