

# A Case of India and Iran, Political Relationship since Gulf War to 2001

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## Abstract

Encouraging national interest is the basic objective of foreign policy. From this view point, this paper tries to analyze the India's role in making political relations good with all over the world especially with the Middle East and more specially with Iran. Indo –Iran relations have an evidences of centuries back marked by meaningful interactions. These two Countries share a border till 1947, and they share some common features in their Language, Culture and Traditions. Both regions of South Asia and the Persian Gulf have Powerful political Commercial, Cultural, Energy and people to people links. After independence, India and Iran established diplomatic relations on March 1950. Currently India has two Consulates in Iran, Bandar Abbas and Zahedan. Shah of Iran visited India in March 1956 and also Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Iran in September 1959. Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Iran in April 1974 and Prime Minister Shri Moraji Desai visited Iran in June 1977 and again Shah of Iran visited India in February 1978. India was always trying to remain close to the Arab region, and especially with the Gulf, significantly contributing India's energy requirements, India has always favored a broad-based engagement with the West Asian countries to foster both economic and strategic interests. These two countries made some high level visits to each other's country for the promotion, development and improvement of their political, economic, and commercial relations.

**Keywords:** bilateral, cultural, Economic relations, Iran, India, high level delegation visits, energy national interest.

## Objectives of the Study

- To study the political relationship between India and Iran since Gulf war to 2001.
- To study the high level visits between these two countries.

## Methodology

For the purpose of study both published and unpublished Primary and Secondary data has been utilized and is collected from various journals, newspapers, books and from internet

## Political relations

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Iran withdrew from the Baghdad Pact and started looking toward South Asia and East Asia for fulfilling its Economic and Strategic necessities.<sup>1</sup> The Tehran Declaration signed in 2001 laid the foundation of Strategic relations between India and Iran, the Delhi Declaration of 2003 galvanized the bilateral Military relations in the areas of Sea-lane control and Joint Naval exercises, among others (Mosavi, 2011).

New chapter of relations were opened up after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 between these two Countries. Least interactions had been seen between India and Iran during the Gulf war period. This period was remained as a stress and strain between these two countries. No visits were paid between these two countries as the overall relations were smooth, calm and cool because of Iran, Iraq war on September 22, 1980 to 1988. The then President of Iran Bani-Sadr, said "*India could play an important role in protecting Afghanistan from foreign invasion*".<sup>2</sup> Iran's dire need and necessity compel her to turn towards India for its political support to challenge Super Power influence in the region as well as Economic Sanctions by the West. The then foreign Minister of Iran, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati highlighted that the "*Stability and peace in region is only possible with the strengthening of political relations between India and Iran and It would lead to Super Power Influence out of this*".<sup>3</sup>

## Indo - Iran relations since 1980.

A high level delegation under the leadership of Iranian Commerce Minister, Reza Sadr paid a visit to India in the month of June 1980. He said "*Iran had chosen to send the delegation to India not by accident but by design*". This high level delegation was along with 7 Deputy Ministers visited certain Industrial Units, Manufacturing Tractors, Diesel Engines and Electronic Motors<sup>4</sup>.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Mines and Industries said that "*the delegation was looking around for new source of supply for components and raw materials. It would also welcome technical Know-how for setting up small scale Industries*"

From 18 to 22 July 1983, the then Prime Minister of India P.V Narasimha Rao visited Iran and highlighted *“the great achievements of the past should make us humble and little aware of our responsibilities to ourselves today and to our history. We have to build on the sound foundation laid by the previous generations”*<sup>5</sup>. He was along with high level delegation including Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs K. Natwar Singh and also other officials of the Ministry and the officials of the Ministers of Information and Broadcasting, Steel and Mines, Finance, Commerce, Education, Culture and Industry. Indian Prime Minister met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, the President of Iran Mir Hassan Mosavi, the Prime Minister Hashmi Rafsanjani the Speaker of the Majlis Asgarowaladi, and the Minister of Commerce and Minister of other industry Behzad Nabavi.<sup>6</sup> These leaders discussed and emphasized on their anti-Imperialist and anti-Colonist freedom struggles.<sup>7</sup>

Again in 1984, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran Sheikh-ul-Islam visited India. He stressed that better Commercial and Economic Relations between the two countries would contribute to Economic independence of India and Iran, and it was Iran’s policy to purchase as much as possible from India.<sup>8</sup>

On 7 January 1985, an Agreement was concluded between these 2 countries. In addition to this, India would assist Iran to accelerate the area of Co-operation in various fields including setting up of Job Intensive Rural Industries, Textile and Agricultural Implement factories and Satellite Communication. The stress was on Industrial Co-operation. Also the Commission agreed to set up Joint Ventures in the 2 Countries to tap their Domestic and International markets.<sup>9</sup>

Again in 1986 the Foreign Minister of Iran Dr. Velayati along with high level delegation visited India for the third time, both sides agreed that these two countries would help each other in the fields of Power, Steel, Transport, Telecommunication and railways.<sup>10</sup>

In December 1987, Minister for heavy Industry Behzad Nabavi of Iran along with high level Iranian Industrial delegation visited India and met Union Minister for Industry J. Vangal Rao and Finance Minister Narayan Dutt Tiwari.<sup>11</sup> A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between these two Countries on Industrial Co-operation, Transaction Research and Training, Transfer of Technology and supply of Equipment and Machinery, Consultancy and Technical Services, and in the fields of Machine Building, Diesel Engine Manufacturing, and Equipment for Refineries, Power Plant, Cement and Sugar were taken under consideration and agreed for mutual Co-operation. Also they discussed on Public and Private sector areas like Automobiles and Components, Machine tools, Power Engines, Castings, Forging and Foundry items.<sup>12</sup>

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in September 1989 on Consular and Visa related issues between External Affairs Joint Secretary Naresh Dayal and Iranian Ambassador Ibrahim Rahimpur.<sup>13</sup>

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Syed Rohullah Khomeini died on 3 June 1989, on his death Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi stated *“Iran lost a Spiritual leader of the magnetism and charisma, Imam Khomeini was a revolutionary of great eminence and of great conviction. It is a grievous loss for the people of Iran and is shared by the people of India. Imam Khomeini extolled the high values of Islam. He exemplified the Shiite ethics of self-denial. He protested against the rampant Westernization and materialism, which have destroyed traditional values. The outpouring grief at the passing away of Imam Khomeini is measures of the stature and the affection and the devotion that his countrymen gave him. In Khomeini's place in history is assured.”*<sup>14</sup>

Gulf war was started on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1990 with the invasion of Iraqi army on Kuwait under the cruel Dictatorship of Saddam Hussain and this war came to be known as Gulf War, and the war would be declared over by 28<sup>th</sup> February 1991, also its bad consequences on economy in the Middle East have very harsh effects

The relations of both these Countries warmed when the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan began its gradual dominance in Afghan politics in early 1990s. This common challenge of Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan and Pakistan brought India and Iran close to each other and persuaded them on improving mutual relations. This challenge led to a series of high level visits between India and Iran. In November 1992, the then Foreign Minister of Iran Ali Akbar Velayati visited New Delhi. After that the Prime Ministers of both Countries visited each other’s Country.

After Fourteen years of Iran's revolution, Indian Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao visited Iran in September 1993. Main highlights during the visit included discussions on the construction of a pipeline to supply Iranian Natural Gas to India and allowing India to develop transit facilities in Iran for Indian products destined for the landlocked Central Asian republics and in return Iranian President Akbar Hashmi Rafsanjani visited India in April 1995, and also Indian Vice President Shri K.R Narayan visited Iran in 1996.

The relations become more powerful with the visit of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Iran in April 2001. He was warmly welcomed by the Iranian President, who described it as *“a new chapter in the field of human and International relations”*<sup>15</sup> and the result of this visits was signing of Tehran Declaration in which both sides motivated to launch a new stage of constructive and mutually benefitted cooperation, particularly covering the fields of Energy, Transit and Transport, Industry, Agriculture and Service Sector. They also agreed to actively promote Scientific and Technological Cooperation, including among others, joint research

projects, short and long-term training courses and exchange of related information on regular bases.<sup>16</sup>

### Conclusion and suggestions

Indo-Iran relations has great significance in 21<sup>st</sup> century. These two countries need each other's help and assistance by virtue of their geographical proximity, cultural background, and coordination in strategic profits, geopolitical and geostrategic condition. Iran with the extensive Gas resources is the choice for India, Because of the fast growing need of India to this material on one hand, and the capabilities of Iran to answer this need on the other hand, brought mutual capacities in the relations between the two countries and also the Economical, Oil and Trade Co-operations and because of the overlapping Economical needs of the two Countries brought remarkable capacities for the mutual relationships, but these relations suffer from Iran- Iraq war in 1980 to 1988. India has been conservative about nuclear issues against Iran (in spite of its negative vote) in order to make the most of it and the policy of India is avoiding conflicts with America and Europe.

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