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## Indo- Iran Political Relationship from 2002 to 2013

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### **Abstract:**

*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 Commercial, Cultural, Energy and people to people links. After independence, India and Iran have 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 Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Iran in September 1959. However their relations started improving during the 1960s and 1970s, as their interests co-occurred, both these nations started making active efforts to modify their relations by keeping up high level contacts, and was followed by very significant visits, especially, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's visit to Iran in 1993 and President Hashmi Rafsanjani's visit to India in 1995. The status of both these countries is very significant in South and West Asian Region. India and Iran have harmonized, that their ties were not fixed only by the issue of culture and Islam but extend much farther. The common ambition for cooperation and friendship has lessened the misunderstandings, and both the countries can now look forward to a more stable and reliable relationship. In 1993 Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Iran where he told Ayatollah Khomeini that the destruction of the Babri Masjid was an isolated incident and did not encroach on India's secular character. In March 1994, Dinesh Singh, Indian External Affairs Minister officially visited Iran, and in January 1995 Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati visited New Delhi. In April 1995 Also Rafsanjani President of Iran visited India and a wide range of discussions took place. In 1997, the election of Mohammad Khatami as President of Iran and the appointment of Iran's new foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi, and the friendly statements to develop cooperation on the basis of common respect argue well wishes for future Indo-Iranian bilateral and friendly relationship.*

**Keywords:** India, Iran, high level official visits, Agreements, Economic relations.

### **1. Introduction**

In 1990's as much as diplomatic ties of India and Iran are concerned Iran supported the Northern alliance in Afghanistan against the Taliban regime. Islamic religion and culture became a new link of relations after the Islamic conquests. Relations during the cold war era between the two countries were aloof, while Iran enjoys good relations with the US and India adopted Non -Alignment policy that included a Socialist world. The whole scenario of relationship between these two countries was changed by the dawn of Iran's Islamic revolution and relations were still cold. After Islamic revolution, Iran left pro American Orientation and became a member of Non-Alignment. While India was in suspense of Iran's efforts to export the revolution throughout the Muslim world. The most important phase of relations was in September 1993 when Indian Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao visited Iran, and in 1995 the Iranian president Akbar Hashmi Rafsanjani visited India and in October 1996, Indian vice President Shri R K Narayanan paid their visit to Iran.

### **2. Political Relations**

Relations between them were further strengthened with the visit of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2001 and a return visit was paid by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami in 2003, and was also a chief guest at the Republic Day Parade. Again in January 2003 a return visit was paid by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami to India gave a new impetus to the bilateral relations and also he was a Chief Guest at the Republic day function. During his visit the famous "New Delhi Declaration" and strategic partnership "for a more stable, secure and prosperous region and for enhanced regional and global cooperation." was signed between these two countries. Since then, Indian firms have entered different Economic contracts with Iran's Government particularly in the field of Energy Industries. Besides these two important articles, seven other accords were also signed in the areas of Economic Exchanges, Science and Technology, Information Technology, Educational Training, Reconstruction of Afghanistan and Anti-Terrorism. Defense Cooperation and Training and exchange of visits were other parts of bilateral cooperative agreements<sup>1</sup>.

Indian Ministry of External Affairs claimed that in its 2005-2006 annual report the Indo-Iranian cooperation had "acquired a strategic dimension flourishing in the fields of energy, trade and commerce, information technology and transit." Again in June 2005, Iran and

India signed a multi-dollar trade, under which India will import 7.5 million tons of Liquefied Natural Gas annually from Iran for 25 years starting 2009. Also this agreement highlighted that Indian participation in the development of Yadavaran and Jufeyr Oil fields in Iran. It is significant that Indian exporters provide about 40 percent of Gasoline that keeps Iran moving<sup>ii</sup>.

After the New Delhi Declaration, Indo-Iranian business has had noteworthy enhancement apart from Energy. According to the Indian Embassy in Tehran, India "exports goods worth US \$ 1.937 billion to Iran and imports goods worth US\$ 11.049 billion from Iran. Iran exports Crude Oil and Petroleum products worth US \$ 10.6 billion to India and India's exports include Petroleum products worth US \$ 850 million. Almost Trade volume between India and Iran has reached US \$ 13 billion in 2007. The trade between these two countries grew by 80 percent."<sup>iii</sup>.

Indo -Iran's Strategic Dialogue was one of the most important mechanisms that came out from the 2001 meeting. In October 2001, the first such meeting was organized, and it was convened by the then Foreign Secretary, Chokila Iyer, of India and by Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia and the Pacific Mohsen Aminzadeh. In these meetings three major areas of concern were undertaken in the first meeting; (one): Regional and International security perspectives, (second): The Security and Defense policies of India and Iran and (third): Issues related to the International Disarmament Agenda. In May 2005 the fourth and last meeting was concluded between Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Aminzadeh and Rajiv Sigr Undersecretary of Indian Ministry of External Affairs stressed on Gas Pipelines and upon Bilateral Agreement for LNG.<sup>iv</sup>.

Again in 29 April 2008 President Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited India. Both India and Iran exchanged the Instrument of Ratification for the Agreement signed on July 2010 on transfer of Sentenced Prisoners should be operationalized.

Both these Countries have several bilateral Consultative Mechanisms at various levels which meet regularly. Foreign Offices of these Countries also hold regular consultations on bilateral and regional issues. In July 2011, Foreign Secretary of India Smt. Nirupama Rao visited Tehran for the 9<sup>th</sup> round of Foreign Office Consultations at the invitation of her counterpart, Dr. Mohammad Ali Fathollahi, Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia and Oceania Affairs. In addition to this holding the Foreign Office Consultations, She called on Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Dr. Saeed Jalali. During these meetings some important issues of concern were undertaken like combating Global Terrorism, Energy, North -South Transport Corridor, Developments in Afghanistan and Regional Security and Stability.

The Indian Foreign Minister Shri Meira Kumar paid an official visit to Iran on November 2011, after the invitation of Iran's Speaker of the Majlis, Dr. Ali Larijani. She inaugurated Guru Rabindranath's Technology Park near Tehran. She also called on President of Iran Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Minister of New and Renewable Energy Dr. Farooq Abdullah visited Iran in March 2012 on the invitation of Minister of Energy Engineer Majid Namjoo. Dr. Abdullah was also along with the high level Business Delegation consists of India Companies active in the fields of Renewable Energy.

Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. Akbar Salehi visited India in May 2012 as Presidents Special Envoy and to invite Prime Minister of India for the 16<sup>th</sup> Nam Summit.

Comptroller and Auditor General of India visited Iran in June 2012 on the invitation of Supreme Audit Court of Iran (SAC) and also called on Speaker of Majlis Dr. Ali Larijani

Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Iran on 26 to 30 August 2012 to attend the 16<sup>th</sup> Non -Alignment (NAM) Summit held in Tehran. He said: "there is lot of interest in doing business with India and getting Indian investment in infrastructure. There are of course difficulties imposed by western sanction, but subject to that I think we will explore ways and means of developing our relations with Iran"<sup>v</sup>. The 16<sup>th</sup> Nam Summit was held under the Iranian Superintendence. Also Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh met Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei and Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Both the Countries re-examine the entire bilateral relationship and called for further strengthening of centuries old relationship between them.

Honorable Minister of State (MOS) for the Water Resource and Minority Affairs Shri Vincent H Pala visited Tehran in September 2012 to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> Governing Board of Meeting (GBM-8) of Regional Center on Urban Water Management (RCUWM).

Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia and Oceania Dr. Syed Abbas Aragchi visited India on October 2012 for the 10<sup>th</sup> round of FOC (full operational capability). Again in October 2012 Minister of Energy of Iran H.E Eng. Namjoo in turn visited India to attend the Global Ministerial level on "International seminar on Energy Access" which was held in New Delhi.

Iranian Vice President and Head of Department of Environment H.E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Mohammadzadeh visited Hyderabad in November 2012 to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP) of UN Convention on Biodiversity.

In December 2012 Iran's Supreme Leaders Senior Advisor Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati visited India.

Again in 24 to 28 February 2013, Dr. Ali Larijani made a return visit to India. He also called on high level delegates as honorable President, Vice President, Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister in New Delhi.

Iran's Deputy Minister for International and legal affairs Dr. H.E Mehdi Akhoundzadeh visited India in November 2012 to attend the 12<sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers (COM) meetings of IOR-ARC member Countries in Gurgaon, Haryana.

Apart from Indian PM's assertion in 2012, in 4 May 2013 Indian foreign minister Salman Khurshid and his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Salehi under the framework of joint commission highlighted four major cooperation areas.

- 1) Regional connectivity (Iran to Afghanistan and Central Asia).
- 2) To enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation
- 3) Cooperation on Regional Security issues (Afghan war, US Withdrawal and reconciliation process in Afghanistan) and
- 4) Enhancing cultural and people-to-people contacts.

### 3. Conclusion and Suggestions

Here, it is suggested that although Iran and India have a close historical relationship, these relations needed to be modernized. New fields of co-operations should be discovered related to capabilities and needs of the two countries. India is moving fast on its track of development and possesses abundant capabilities in for mutual cooperation's. The Iranian and Indian scholars can create a solid support for the development of mutual relations based on reciprocal needs with regards to the regional and global aspects. Iran with the outstanding position in the realm of energy and its geographical proximity to India is able to provide a great deal of India's needs. Planning to achieve this capability requires a view beyond the technological and economic view on this issue. A view based on which infrastructural relations on energy should be established with India as a future great power. India's relations with Iran could prove to be a useful bridge between the U.S. and Iran. Rather than push to curb these ties, Washington may find value in considering New Delhi's potential role as an interlocutor in reaching out to Tehran. India and Iran need to deepen their bilateral engagement through a well-defined policy framework which helps them mutually leverage their economic and strategic necessities. Another important perspective for India to further develop economic engagement with Iran lies in the emerging market of Iran which is evolving through larger private sector participation. Therefore, Iran would need services support in many areas like telecommunication, IT and IT-enabled services as well as transport sector development particularly railways.

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