

PART - III

CONCLUSION

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The Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is largely based on the following considerations: (i) To follow the aims and principles of the revolution in the framing of the new foreign policy; (ii) to diminish the super power domination and interference in the decision making; (iii) To adopt a policy of real non-alignment under the motto of 'Neither East Nor West' and to maintain equidistance from both the superpowers; (iv) To give emphasis on regional cooperation and security; (v) Neither to act as policeman of the region nor to permit any one to act like that; (vi) To export the revolution and its principles to other parts of the world specially to the muslim countries and peoples; (vii) To unite the muslims all over the world; (viii) To show concern for the problems of muslims in any part of the world both practically and morally; (ix) To oppose all types of oppression and exploitation; (x) To improve economic and political relations with the countries of the third world; (xii) and, above all, to create a new just world order free from exploitation, domination and oppression, based on the principles of equality, justice, mutual co-existence, non-interference, non-aggression and respect for each other's sovereignty and integrity.

Iran, which was under the direct influence and domination of the United States for many decades during Reza Shah Pahlavi, experienced one of the successful Revolutions of human history which was mainly guided by the religious clerics and followed by the middle and poor class of the society. The revolution which promised a new Islamic Iran opposed to Imperialism, domination and exploitation compelled the decision makers of the new regime to toe its line in policy making in order to fulfill the aspirations and hopes of the people. Similarly, the Islamic Republic of Iran adopted a foreign policy in tune with the broader objectives of many third world countries, in consonance with Islamic spirit.

The revolutionary tirade against superpowers, particularly the United States, was a natural reaction of Iran's long experience of exploitation under imperialism and superpowers domination. The direct influence of U.S. over the decision-making of Iran since 1953, Shah's role as the policeman of the region on the behest of the United States, granting of diplomatic immunity to American citizens working in Iran, introduction of 'White Revolution', permission to CIA to setup its network in Iran were naked truths of the United States infringement in Iran's internal affairs. The British

and the American control over the economy, specially oil and Russian record of intervention in Iran throughout the 19th century as well as during the two world wars are still alive in the memories of Iranian people.

As historical factors exercise considerable bearing over the decision making of the foreign policy, the above factors influenced Iran to adopt a policy which can help to prelude from such experience. Thus, immediately after the proclamation of Islamic Republic, Iran declared that it will follow a policy of 'Neither East Nor West'. The basic objective of this policy are as: (a) not to play into the hands of any super power; (b) adopt an independent economic and foreign policy free from any outside domination and fear; (c) To support all the people and countries who have been sufferers of superpowers exploitation and imperialism. The policy of 'Neither East Nor West' is very close to the aims, objectives, and principles of the Non-aligned Movements, which also started as a reaction of the superpowers domination, opposing all types of exploitation, oppression, Imperialism, colonialism and Neo-colonialism. Thus in order to give practical shape to its policy of 'Neither East Nor West' Iran joined the Non-aligned Movement. Though there were differences of opinion among the leaders in Iran about the meaning and

concept of Non-alignment, Khomeini claimed that Iran was the only true non-aligned country. Khomeini and other leaders of the Islamic Republic on several occasions criticised the members of the non-aligned countries for not remaining true to the basic principles of the movement allowing the ^{themselves} temeselves to be exploited by either of the superpowers. Yet Iran's decision to join the NAM helped it to come closer to many third world countries like India, Indonesia and play an important role in the movement.

In order to achieve the goals of 'Neither East Nor West' Iran, beside joining the Non-aligned Movement also withdrew itself from CENTO, released herself from the clutches of the United States, refused to play the American game in the region, cancelled its many contracts with the United States and other countries of the Western bloc, it renounced the 1959 treaty with the United States and 1921 treaty with the Soviet Union and also maintained reasonable distance from the Soviet Union. It also urged upon other countries of the world to follow the policy Iran had adopted and to reduce their dependence on the superpowers. Leadership in Iran strongly criticised those countries who were allies of super powers particularly the United States and refrain from improving

relation's with them. Its strained relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia were mainly due to their close alliance with the United States.

The antagonistic relations with United States which resulted into the severance of diplomatic relations had been motivated by several factors. First, were the principles, ideology and experiences of Islamic Revolution that did not permit Iran to maintain close relations with the U.S. The continuous support to Shah by the United States throughout the Revolution as well as its encouragement to anti-revolutionary forces with the aim of subverting the revolution were the main causes of bitterness between the two. The strong anti-American sentiments of Iranian people was also one of the reasons of anti-American stand.

The seizure of American Embassy in Iran which was obviously against the basic principles and norms of International Law was mainly aimed at reducing the American interference in Iran and crushing the anti-revolutionary forces. This move also satisfied the sentiments of Iranian people and generated confidence in them as they were so powerful as they could challenge one of the superpowers. The seizure of American Embassy and hostage crisis was one of the unique experiences of modern world. Iran set an example that a

small country with so many internal problems could challenge the super power if it had will to do so. The economic sanctions, severance of diplomatic relations with Iran by many countries which brought Iran into a situation of total isolation could not exercise any influence over the Iranian leadership to deviate from the path they had chosen. Above all Iran considered the 'isolation' as a boon rather than a problem or a threat Imam Khomeini had said on one occasion that by living in isolation for some time would be good for Iran as it will help Iran to differentiate between its friends and foes and in re-establishing stable relations with like minded and friendly countries.

Many observers speculated that after severing relations with the United States, Iran would fall into the Soviet Camp. But this speculation proved wrong when Iran equally criticised the Soviet Union and decided to maintain equidistance from both the super powers. The main reason of maintaining distance from the Soviet Union was that Iran did not want to compromise with its policy of 'Neither East Nor West'. The main hindrances in coming closer to the Soviet Union were: (i) Russia's long record of Imperialism throughout the 19th century particularly during the two World Wars; (ii) its

continuous support to Iranian leftists and ethnic minorities;

(iii) In post revolutionary period Soviet Unions arms intervention in Afghanistan which was considered a direct threat for Iran's sovereignty and integrity; and (iv) charges of Iranian leaders on Russia for assisting and cooperating with Tooth party and ethnic insurgency groups in different parts of Iran.

Iran's strong attitude towards Soviet Union had surprised the world as there were many reasons to come closer to the Soviet Union such as Iran's long common boundary with the Soviet Union. Antagonising both the super powers at the same time was also not considered reasonable and above all the Soviet Union was a neighbouring Superpower with its growing economic importance and its emergence as an important supply route to Iran. Despite these factors Iran did not change its attitude towards Soviet Union. But one thing can be noticed that relations between the two improved after the revolution. Even some Iranian leaders did not hesitate to describe Soviet Union as a 'friendly country'. The Soviet Union's balanced attitude towards Iran and its continued attempt to improve relation's was also one of the basic reasons in softening of Iran's attitude towards it. The soviet diplomacy not to involve directly in the American embassy and hostage crisis

issue also softened Iran's attitude. On Iranian charges of Soviet support to ethnic minorities, Soviet Union not only denied the charge but also adopted a reasonable approach to temporise the Iranian anger. On Afghanistan Soviet Union repeatedly assured Iran of withdrawing its forces as soon as possible. As such there was no major issue and differences between the two which could obstruct normal relationship except Afghan problem. Actually it was the Russian intervention in Afghanistan that created too many problems in bilateral relation's between the two.

Iran's regional policy was directed by many considerations: it continue to give priority to regional peace and stability, it asked the governments of the regional muslim states not to act as the lackeys of the superpowers in the region, advocated for the unity of the muslims and muslim countries under its policy of unity of Ummah. Its basic criticism towards many countries of the region, particularly Saudi Arabia, was that the governments in these states were not according to the principles of Islam and they were acting as lackeys of super power in the region. Thus it called the people to the overthrow the present rulers in order to establish Islamic governments in their respective countries

taking example of the Islamic Republic." The exporting of revolution and basic ideology and principles of Islamic Republic was also one of the objectives of Iran's foreign policy that threatened most of the muslim countries. The winds of the revolution were noticed in many countries especially in those countries where Shias were living in sizable numbers such as Iraq, Kuwait and Bahrain. The threat of an Iran like revolution in Iraq was also considered to be one of the reasons of Iraqi attack on Iran. For this purpose Iran launched a propaganda campaign through out the world especially in the muslim countries through different means and also used the occasion of Hajj to aware the people about the ideology, principles and achievements of the Islamic Republic. The use of the occasion of Haj for political means became one of the important cause of worsening Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia. The Saudi's argued that the occasion of Haj is only for religious purpose while Iranian clergymen argued that Haj does not mean only to come and perform the rituals but this occasion should also be utilised to solve the socio-political and other problems of the muslims through out the world. Imam Khomeini also demanded for the joint administration of the Haj in which muslim throughout the world should be represented.

Tehran's relations, with most of the countries particularly with the regional states was influenced by Iran-Iraq war. Its weak relations with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council was due to later economic and political backing to Iraq in its war with Iran. On the other hand its improved relations with the states of Steadfastness Front was mainly due to their support to Iran in the War. Thus, during the prolonged Iran-Iraq war where Iran's relations with most of the regional countries deteriorated, its relations with Steadfastness Front continued to be normal and friendly. Despite many differences with Syria and P.L.O., (all members of Steadfastness Front) which surfaced later on in its relation with these states, the relations continued to improve through out the war. There were many points of agreements and disagreements between Iran and these countries. The points of agreement are as follows: their opposition and condemnation of American Imperialism in the region, support to Palestinian cause, their common urge that all the countries of the region should be free of outside domination, and should adopt a common stand on economic and political issues. They also jointly advocated that regional problems should be solved in regional perspective without any outside interference.

Relation's with Libya was somehow problematic. Qaddafi's regime, his personal image and ideology and his action programme as an Islamic Revolution had disturbed Iran. However, many stands which were taken by Khomeini's regime had been earlier taken by the Qaddafi, such as negating the superpower domination (Qaddafi from the very beginning had adopted an anti American line), demand for joint administration of the Haj and unity of the Muslim and Muslim states. The main issue between Qaddafi and Khomeini was over the question of acquiring global Islamic leadership. Despite many similarities in ideology and approach of both the leaders, no one was going to accept the other as the sole leader.

After the culmination of the Islamic Revolution relation between Turkey (a member of NATO and CENTO) and Iran improved, particularly after the beginning of Iran-Iraq War. Officials of both the countries used every opportunities to call for closer and more comprehensive ties in the political, economic and commercial fields. Turkey became one of the important trade partner of Iran, and a trade route to Iran during the prolong Iran-Iraq War. A number of trade and economic agreements were signed between the two countries during this period. Despite closer economic ties between Turkey and Iran,

tension also persisted between the two due to Iran's allegation that Iranian dissidents were operating from bases in Turkey. However those allegations were denied by the Turkish government but the Turkish authorities were not successful in satisfying the Iranians. With regards to Iran's relations with Turkey it may be pointed out that Iran compromised with its ideology by coming closer to a country which is the member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and one time member of Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) beside being a close allie of the United States. Actually the national interest of the country dictated to come closer to Turkey at a time when its relation's with most of the countries of the Western bloc and the region were tense.

Another neighbouring country with whom Iran's relations have been cordial is Pakistan. It was also unnatural as Pakistan did not fit in the ideological frame-work of Iran. Pakistan which has been playing as an American stooge in the region was undoubtedly to be placed by Iran in the line of Egypt and other regional countries who were under the direct influence of America. Thus in the post revolutionary period cordial Iran-Pakistan relations were unlikely but Russian intervention in Afghanistan compelled Iran to come closer to

Pakistan.

Afghanistan which is a neighbouring Muslim state became one of the source of tension for Iran for over a decade due to Russian intervention. The Russian intervention in Afghanistan severely disturbed the Iranians. The leaders in Iran unequivocally condemned the intervention and demanded the immediate pull out of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Iran also did not approve the American involvement in Afghan crisis and advocated to solve the problem in regional perspective without any interference from any power from outside the region. Iran also gave a peace formula in 1981 for the solution of the Afghan problem. Iran continuously pressurised the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan and put complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan as one of the main conditions of normalising relations with the Soviet Union.

With regard to Arab-Israel conflict there was a major shift in Iran's policy compared to its policy in the pre-revolutionary period. Shah maintained cordial relation with Israel and advocated for a peaceful solution of the conflict through American mediation. The maintenance of diplomatic and economic ties with Israel by Shah was one of the issues for which Imam Khomeini always criticised Shah. Imam Khomeini

always considered Israel as an enemy of Islam and Muslims and an agent of super powers to create disturbances and fulfill the interest of imperialist powers in the region. He tactfully used the Israeli card against Shah arguing that by maintaining relations with Israel Shah was doing an unislamic work as he declared that maintaining any type of relations with Israel was un-Islamic. Here Imam Khomeini very cleverly tried to get the support of Iranian people and muslims of the world by exploiting their sentiment on the issue of Israel and Zionism as muslims through out the world are strongly in favour of the liberation of Jerusalem. The anti-Israel stand which had been taken by Imam Khomeini long before the establishment of Islamic Republic continued to be one of the objectives of Iran's foreign policy. Immediately after the culmination of Islamic Republic Iran declared to severe diplomatic relation's with Israel. The PLO leader Yaser Arafat was given a warm welcome in Iran on the next day of the proclamation of Islamic Republic and the place which was earlier occupied by the Israel embassy was given to PLO to open its embassy. Imam Khomeini also urged upon the Muslim countries and muslims all over the world to unite for the cause of the liberation of Palestine. He advocated for a full fledged war against Israel

in order to Liberate Jerusalem. He announced that last Friday of Ramzan will be celebrated as Quds (Jerusalem) Day in order to mobilise the World muslim's public opinion to prepare and to unite for the liberation of Quds (Jerusalem). But the Iranian support to PLO was only verbal and moral not practical. Leaders in Iran declared that they were not going to help PLO materially but only diplomatically on international forums and in international organization like U.N.O. The relations with PLO and Yaser Arafat did not last long as Iran started backing and supporting other groups who were involved in Palestinian liberation movement and were dominated by Shias. Iran also challenged the validity of Yasar Arafat as the sole leader of Palestinian. It also criticised the PLO. The anti-Israeli stand which was taking by Imam Khomeini in pre-revolutionary period gradually lost its emphasis as Iran did not support PLO in the same manner as was expected by the Palestinians. However Iran condemned the Israeli aggression and demanded for the rights of Palestinian people to have a Palestinian states in UNO repeatedly and forcefully.

Under its policy of supporting liberation movements and to oppose all types of oppression, Iran beside Afghanistan and Palestinians also extended its support to Lebanon in the

region. The Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon was strongly condemned by Iran. The Iranian representative in the U.N. while strongly condemning the Israeli invasion demanded for the just solution of the crisis. In 1981, the Foreign Ministry of Iran described the Israeli invasion as an imperialist plot to disintegrate Lebanon. In March 1985 again the Iranian representative in United Nations demanded for a clear resolution on Lebanon crisis condemning the Israeli aggression and its illegal occupation of Lebanese territory.

The American air attack on Libya in 1986 was also strongly condemned by Iran. The President of the Islamic Republic described the attack not only on Libya but an aggression against the Islamic world and Islamic community. Iran also demanded for the economic and political boycott of the United States and urged the world community and international organization to adopt practical measures to face such type of further barbaric attempts.

Islamic Republic of Iran also repeatedly condemned the Apartheid in South Africa and stopped selling oil to South Africa. It also expressed its support and backing to the struggle of African people against racialism. In Africa Iran also established diplomatic relations with SWAPO and extended

its support to the organization.

In case of Chad Iran criticise French intervention and described it as a part of the imperialist conspiracy to impose neo-colonialism on the third world countries.

American intervention in Nicaragua and El-Salvader was also described as threat to regional peace and stability and extended its full support to Nicargua in United Nations. Iran demanded that local differences between Nicaragua and its neighbour should be solved through the good offices of the Contadora Group.

Another important objective of Iran's foreign policy has been to improve relations with the countries of the third world. Actually after severing dependence on superpower and its allies it was obvious to improve relations with the countries of the third world in order to fulfill it's needs. With third world countries Iran has the advantage of maintaining relations on its own conditions or unconditionally. Under this policy Iran improved its relations with a number of third world countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. It also established fresh diplomatic relations with a number of countries. Iran considerably improved its economic relations with third world countries. Many contracts with the United States and Western countries were either

cancelled or Stopped. In concluding the new contracts Iran decided to give priority to friendly and non-aligned countries. However a number of contracts with Western countries especially with Germany which had been a potential economic partner of Iran since long, were signed after the end of Iran-Iraq war during the process of the reconstruction movement.

Since 1979 the foreign policy of Islamic Republic of Iran may be divided primarily in to two periods: (a) Khomeini era (1979-89) and (b) post Khomeini era (since 1989). The Khomeini era can further be divided into three stages: (a) period of uncertainty, (b) period of isolation, and (c) period of war. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini's personality, his ideology, thought, will, harsh wordings and strong stands continued to exercise influence over the decision-making of foreign policy till his death in 1989. There was no decision of foreign and domestic policies which could be implemented without the approval and permission of Imam Khomeini.

After the success of the revolution and overthrow of Shah there was political instability in Iran and many countries of the world were reluctant to adopt a definite attitude towards

Iran. Thus, most of the countries who were not going to be directly affected by the Iranian revolution either kept silent or spoke tactfully. The hostage crisis followed by the economic sanctions and severance of diplomatic relations with most of the countries brought Iran into a stage of isolation. The prolonged war with Iraq had also a strong bearing on the foreign policy of Iran. As during the period of war Iran defined its friends and enemies according to the country's stand on the war. Those countries who helped and supported Iraq were branded as enemy of Iran and received strong criticism from Tehran. On the other hand those countries extended their support to Iran were considered to be best friends while those who declared and maintained their neutrality were dealt accordingly.

After the death of Imam Khomeini many speculation that with the coming of moderate groups in power Iran's relations with the United States will improve and a major shift in its policy will take place worst confronted. In the post Khomeini era, Iran continued to follow by and largely the same policies, as were adopted during Khomeini regime. Since there is still a strong anti-American lobby active in Iran which do not permit the decision-makers to refrain from softening their attitude towards the United States. However the intensity of bitterness

which was noticed during Khomeini regime has considerably weakened.

On Kuwait crisis Iran adopted a reasonable and neutral stand. While on the one hand it condemned the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq and demanded for the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, on the other hand it opposed the stationing of multinational forces in the region.

With regard to West European countries the Rushdie affair continued to dominate as an irritant in the relations which resulted in severance of diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom and other countries of the Economic Community. But due to the strong economic interest of many European countries, in Iran, the relations were soon normalised after the European Economic community lifted economic sanctions on Iran in October 1990. Since then a number of economic agreements have been signed with many West European countries.

The expectations that Iran-Saudi relations will improve after the Iran-Iraq war in post Khomeini period were behind owing in the wake of clashes between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi forces during the Haj of 1989, the bomb explosion near Grant Mosque in Mecca and the Saudi allegation of the Iranian involvement in the bomb blast. But apart from many mistrusts, misunderstandings, suspicion, and accusations, efforts to

improve relations were continued by both the states and by many mediators. Consequently in March 1991 after a three years gap diplomatic relations were re-established between Saudi-Arabia and Iran.

Iran re-established and improved diplomatic relations with many countries of the region such as with Kuwait Jordan Egypt and diplomatic relations with Bahrain upgraded to *Charge d' affaires*. However some differences with UAE broke out on the question of the possession of three islands in the Gulf.

Relations with India improved in a dramatic manner with the visit of Indian prime-minister P.V. Narsimha Rao to Iran in September 1993. A number of agreements were signed during his visit.

It is no exaggeration to conclude that the post revolutionary Iran successfully withstood the imperialist onslaught and emerged as a strong force to be reckoned with in the global political scenario. The U.S.A. looks at Iran as a political threat with her Islamic appeal in the third world countries in general and the CIS countries in particular, to the imperialist designs of global hegemony and dominance. It may again be no exaggeration if Iran is credited for raising Islam to the position of a potential ideology to counter imperialism particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in global politics.