CHAPTER - 3

THE REVOLUTION,
THE ISLAMIC STATE
AND THE INDO-IRANIAN RELATIONS
As Mohammad Raza Shah Pahlavi’s dynastic rule succumbed to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, a new phase of estrangement in Iran-India relations set in. Although the Revolution was greeted favourably in India and was viewed as a “reflection of Iran’s quest for identity and national self-assertion,” there were new and persistent differences between the two countries regarding various regional and international issues. It was due to these differences that relations between the two states remained inhibited, notwithstanding the fact that India was among the first countries to recognize the revolutionary government of Ayatollah Khomeini.

In the 2500 years of glorious history of Iran, the year 1978-79 (1357 SH) marks a turning point, that was the year of Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Ayatullah Khomeini, which changed the course of Iran’s history. Regarding the incidents of Sept. 8, 1978, the French News Agency reported, “This morning a bloody clash took place between the armed forced and the demonstrators who had gathered in Maydan-e- Zhalah. During the First machine-gun fire along with the explosion of tear-gas shells at least ten people were killed and some others were injured. Thousands of demonstrators, who having received the announcements had gathered in the Maydan-e- Zhalah since the last night, decided to hold a March and anti-regime demonstration....”

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1 Dr Jalaludine Madani. The Islamic Revolution of Iran, 1986, p. 370.
On the day of the Revolution, the Associated Press, Tehran made the following report.

"After two hours of clashes in Tehran, truckloads of dead bodies left the scene of the clashes. Peace, was however restored in Tehran near about moon time. Intermittent firing still continues. Eyewitnesses report that at least one truckload of the dead and the injured was seen in Maydan-e-Zhalah. The crowd continued to raise the slogan of “death to Shah” and long-love Ayatullah Khomeini” the Guardian stated:

“The Government of Iran has resorted to a bloody clash with its own people. This can lead to its downfall... An army for whose equipment so much money is spent and such a large quantity of weapons have been procured, does not have the realization that necessary peace and tranquility should be maintained for the performance of the duty of internal security.”

Radio of Peoples Front for the Freedom of Amman stated thus:

The Shahs’ police and the SAVAK and his army brought all their destructive weapons in their possession but despite this, they could not put an end to the violence of the masses. On the contrary, these masses have become stronger than Shahs’ destructive organization.

On the fateful black Friday, almost 500 people shot dead. But according to the official version, only 58 people were shot dead. The more
the state became suppressive, the will and determination of the masses
grew stronger. The Islamic revolution was something unexpected by the
world. Because Iran was considered to be an "Island of Stability".  

There are several studies undertaken on the Islamic Revolution of
Iran. But on closer examination, we find that most of these works have
generally analyzed revolution on the basis of social, economic and political
angles. The economic and social approaches have generally emphasized
on the issue of modernization and the rapid economic development of Iran
in the last years of the former Pahlavi regime owing to the hike in oil
incomes as well as the social inequalities that were the products of land
reforms, migration from the rural areas to the towns, the growing affluence
of some sections of the society etc. Those who took up the political
approach normally concentrated on the despotism of Shah absence of
political growth along with the economic growth.

On the other hand, those who focused on the cultural issues mainly
dealt with the religious roots of the Iranian society, the Shiite beliefs of the
masses, and the status of clergy in the Iranian society. Those who follow
the cultural-religious interpretation of the Iranian revolution reject the view
that the revolution was triggered by economic factors and owing to a conflict
between tradition and modernity. The Iranians believed that a tyrant should

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2 Madani, p. 373.
Twenty-Five Years after the Islamic Revolution (ed.), Hamid Ansari, p. 65.
4 Ibid.
be confronted firmly in order to protect one’s faith even if it is at the cost of sacrificing one’s life. Thus the masses by and large, wanted a political and socio-economic order within the framework of Islamic teachings, in the modern age.

In the Iranian society, the *ulemas* had taken very significant part in successfully leading several protest movements in Iran. For example in 1891-92 the *ulemas* stood firmly against the tobacco concessions. In the early 20th Century, between 1905 and 1911, they had called for Constitutional reforms and during 1978-79 they were the moving spirit behind the anti-Shah movement, which became the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Historically most of the protest movements had to rely heavily on Islamic terminology and the *ulemas* (clergy) have always provided leadership not only in matters of faith and religion, but also in the socio-political and even economic spheres. The *ulemas* were very conscious of their position in society and they continued to assert their rights throughout the centuries. In the 19th and the early 20th century, the *ulemas* were mostly agitated by the increasing Western influence and dominance. The second Russo-Iranian War, was the product their successful campaign with the then Shah of Iran.

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6. Ibid.
The tobacco movement of 1892, led by Mirza Hassan Shirazi as the Marja-e-Taqlid in 1892 had issued the fatwa (religious edict) asking Nasiruddin Shah to withdraw the monopoly of Tobacco given to the British company. He even demanded the dismissal of the Prime Minister, who negotiated the concession to the British Company. As a result, British Company had to wind up its operations and leave the country.

It was the first successful political campaign led by the ulema, which inspired them to be more active in politics in the general interest.

There was also a strange-coalition of opposite forces such as the ulema, traders and the progressive intellectuals to protest against the tobacco concession.

As far as the constitutional reforms of 1905-1911 were concerned, the leadership again went in to the hands of Akhound Mulla Mohammad Kazim Khurasani. In this movement the basic attention was focused on opposing the corrupt, nepotism and oppressive government of the country. The ulemas were also projecting themselves as the custodians of morality and justice. The promulgation of constitutional provisions thus became a victory for the ulema. It also denied the monarch his arbitrary powers.

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8 Kiddie, Ibid. p. 18.
During the period 1926-1941 there were certain changes in Iran. Kamal Attaturk became the role model for many. The Iranian prime Minister Reza Khan tried to declare Iran as a secular republic, which was opposed by the Ulema. In fact, the Civil Code of 1928\(^9\) represented a compromise between *Shariah* and European Law, much to the displeasure of the *ulema*.

In order to reduce the influence of the *ulema* on the society and the policy, the Pahlavis tried assiduously to erase the memories of the Arab conquest of Iran and the subsequent Islamic period which commenced from the 7\(^{th}\) Century A.D. There was also a conscious attempt to glorify the pre-Islamic past from the 5\(^{th}\) Century B.C. The Pahlavis also celebrated the 2500 years anniversary of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1971, the purpose of which as to remind the Iranians about their glorious past and its grandeur.

Mohammad Reza Shah continued the administration on the lines end by his father. He found the religious leadership a serious problem to handle. He also noticed with astonishment that most of the opposition to Pahlavi regime came from those people with religious orientation and the ulema were responsible for that.

His agrarian reforms and modernization programmes were beneficial to the poor peasants. But the Shah had directed he reforms to take away the lands belonging to the mosques and other religious institutions in the

\(^{9}\) Ernest R. Oney, Eliter and the Distribution of Power in Iran, 1976, p. 52.
name of his “White Revolution”. This had angered large section of the people and clergy. No wonder, 80,000 mosques and over 1200 other shrines became the centres of resistance during 1978-79 movements against the Shah and his government. The revolutionary movement was certainly led by the religious leadership under Ayatullah Khomeini. Ayatullah Khomeini was able to provide the umbrella for every one – religious groups, reformists, civil rights activities, guerilla groups, political parties and the intellectuals alike. Ayatullah was able to rouse the emotions of the people to such a feverish pitch that they came to regard death at the hands of the Shah’s agents as martyrdom. The formation of the Islamic Republic was a logical continuation of the revolutionary urge and the political developments of several decades in Iran.

**Islamic Constitution**

The leaders of the revolution wanted to consolidate its gains by establishing a new state system based on the Islamic principle. Hence they adopted a new constitution which as Islamic in nature. The main objectives of the revolution were the ouster of the monarchy and the ushering in of a socio-political system based on Islamic principles. In order to achieve this objective, it was necessary to institutionalize and formalize the role of the *ulema* in the Iranian system. This objective had to be fulfilled through a republican form of government.\(^\text{10}\) Hence the establishment of a republic with a constitution based on Islamic principles, was a necessity. In fact, some of

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the major aspects of the constitution are drafted towards these objectives. A referendum was undertaken to know the public opinion and inter the Majlis took up the onerous task.

The basic principles of the Islamic Constitution State that the Islamic Republic is a system based on the belief in the name of god (Allah) and the necessity so obey His orders (Art.2). It is an expression and an embodiment of the desire of the Islamic community in Iran to base their cultural, social, political and economic institutions on the principles and standards stipulated by Quran.11

One of the natural consequences of this was that, the predominance of the religious authority over the society and the polity had to be recognized. For decades, Ayatulla Khomeini had been advocating the need for an Islamic government (Hokumat-e-Islami).12 He had even written a book with the same title. In his earlier writings, Imam Khomeini had insisted that all power and responsibility should be vested with the religious leadership.13 According to the Ayatollah Khomeini, 'the Islamic State is a constitutional state in the sense that those charged with running it, are bound by the rules and the conditions laid down by the Quran and Sunnat. The right to legislate is the prerogative of God. No one on the earth has the absolute or unconditional power to make laws, nor can any one issue an ordinance which has no sanction of god or divine guidance.'

11 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
If god is the supreme legislator and the Quranic laws the guiding principles, then it would be the clergy, which would interpret both the Quran and the divine laws.\textsuperscript{15} The basic issue of what constitutes Islamic or un-Islamic would have to be decided by the ulema.

It was generally assumed that under the Islamic Republican Constitution a government cannot become oppressive and hence it would administer only according to the dictates of Quran and continue only as long as the people support it.

The emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran war viewed with mixed reaction by different nations in the world. The new Republic had posed a serious challenge to delicate regional balance created by the Western\textsuperscript{16} powers. As we have seen earlier, during the great days of cold war, Iran played crucial role within the CENTO which was basically guided by the Western bloc particularly, the USA. During the post cold war and the post revolutionary era the importance of Iran increased in the international politics due to various reasons. Among other things, the following reasons are significant:

1) The creation of the Islamic Republic with a mandate from the people of Iran.

2) The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the rise of the Central Asian Republics.

\textsuperscript{15} Ramzani, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{16} A Sheikh Attar. The Islamic Republic of Iran (Keynote Address in Contemporary Iran and Indo-Iranian Relations (Seminar)).
3) The weakening of Iraq first done to Iran-Iraq war and later due to Gulf war.

The bases of the domestic and foreign policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran are the same on the basis of which the people of Iran following a vast and popular movement decided that the system of government for their ancient country should be an Islamic republic.

Iran had witnessed several movements over the years. But the basic feature of the Islamic Revolution was that it was based on the religion cultural values, which drive their inspiration from the Islamic school of thought. In this context, the fundamental perceptions of the Islamic school of thought about government and the ruling systems are entirely different from those general views on state and society originated in Europe, which are currently prevailing in the contemporary world.

According to the Islamic school of thought the task of the formation of government does not depend on power theory, though political usurpations and military coups have taken place in many Islamic countries in the contemporary world. The Islamic school of thought\textsuperscript{17} in its ideal form believes in the intrinsic perfect ness of human being and hence it was the duty of the rulers to create those conditions necessary for human perfection.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
Since the 19th Century the social and cultural leaders of the Islamic world showed three kinds of reactions for western colonialism and aggression against Islamic world. Some of them thought that the Muslims should give up their struggle for supremacy with Europe, which was going on for a thousand years and accept modernization synonymous with Westernization as the inevitable direction of the Muslim world.

Another segment of the Muslim intellectuals called modernists like Syed Ahmad Khan in India and Abdul Nasser in Egypt tried to reach a new formula to reconcile Islam with the secular West. They concentrated on their efforts to reorient the direction of Muslim history and to reinterpret Islam in the context of modern science and learning. They believed that Islam and the West are incompatible with each other.18 The contradiction, which they faced, was that the reconstruction of Islamic thought along western lines could result in surrendering the autonomy of Islamic thought itself.

A third segment believed in revivalism. For the revivalists, the Prophet established the ideal model of Islamic state. Consequently, the reform and revival on the prophetic model, again, the revivalists insisted that the concept of sovereignty essentially meant the sovereignty of god. But there was lack of a clear and detailed concept of political leadership in their definition of the Islamic worldview.

18 Ibid
Since the overwhelming majority of the population of Iran is Shia, the Shia school of thought dominated common perception of Islamic social values of Iran. During the revolutionary days, reaction against the Shah and the United States came from both the revivalist and modernist. But the reaction against the Shah regime, which was accused to being pro-West, as essentially according to the Shia interpretation of leadership, in which the ulema had a greater role.

The Shia School also believes in the comprehensiveness and universality of Islamic social order and the inseparability of religion from politics and organization and administration of state.\textsuperscript{19}

Any review of the post-revolutionary, Iranian Foreign policy should be viewed in the context of the Shia Islamic thought and its interpretations as well as the state system built up within this framework.

Another important aspect is the geographical position of Iran in Asia, a state of significant importance between Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia and East Asia. Earlier, Iran was\textsuperscript{20} part of the game plan of the super powers. But in the changed circumstances several strategic issues of great importance have also emerged. In fact, Iran is the only non-Arab Muslim country of this region, but shares a significant commonality of Islam with other regional Arab countries. Another point of greater importance is that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[19] Ibid.
\item[20] Earlier, we discussed in detail the Iran’s entry into the CENTO.
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Iran is the country with the longest coastline in the region. Population wise, Iran is the largest in the Middle East. Iran also has the historical presence in the Persian Gulf region and the sea of Oman, which holds two thirds of the world’s oil reserves. In fact during the cold war era, when the USA used Iran as one of its allies against Soviet Union, it was done at a great risk by the Iranian, because Iran had such a vast frontier with the former Soviet Union, which was the largest military power in the fifties and the sixties of the last Century with its unclear arsenals. In the changed circumstances, with the disintegration of the Soviet empire, new nationalities have emerged. However, even each of these new States has their own ethnic animosity and distrust. Further, all these States are landlocked states and Iran is their shortest oceanic outlet.

Central Asia also provides Iran route to China, just as the old silk route provided the outlet for the movement of goods from China to the Western world. As far as South Asia is concerned, Iran has to make its entry through Pakistani borders. But Iran continues to treat India as a neighbour partly due to the historical links of the Iranians and the Indians and also due to the fact that Persian Gulf and the sea of Oman are part of the Indian Ocean.

The second level of Iran foreign policy analysis is the economic factor. Since its discovery in 1908 in Iran, oil has played a crucial role in the

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21 The strategic Significance of Iran has led to several battles in the past.
formulation of the domestic and foreign policies of Iran. More than 90 percent of the export income of Iran comes from oil. Continuation and predictability of the oil income is a vital factor for Iranian policy makers. A corollary of this vital factor is the secure flow of oil in the Persian Gulf region, which becomes one of the important policy considerations of Iranian foreign policy. In this context regional stability, co-operation and multi-lateral confidence among the Persian Gulf countries, which are major oil producers and members of the OPEC, is a pre-requisite.

Iran also requires economic recovery and rehabilitation, particularly after the revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. This requires modern technology in key sectors, which can be provided by India with her technical know-how and skilled manpower. A third factor is the cultural and historical factor, which had bound India and Iran for centuries.

Just as in the case of India and Iran the relationship between Iran and several Central Asian republics was built over the centuries on the basis of common historical bonds. Before Russia had conquered the Central Asian countries, practically no geographical borders existed, between Iran and these countries. Human beings moved freely on both the sides. Hence, Iran's relationship with the Central Asian States was something, which could not be broken either by ideology or by political will. Hence, Iran firmly believed that the prosperity of the Central Asian States

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22 The progress of mankind for thousands of years depended on nations like India, Iran, Egypt, Greece, Rome and Mesopotamia.
depended on creating conditions in each of the countries for economic progress and mutual contacts.

In the wake of the Islamic Revolution, the economic structure of Iran has steadily undergone drastic changes. The events taking place in the aftermath of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the imposition of the 8 year long war of attrition by Iraq, the increasing need for funds to meet the war expenses, the slump in oil prices, the shortage of foreign exchange as a result of international economic sanctions against the country emigration of skilled manpower, the influx of Afghan refugees to Iran, the government’s extensive interference in the activity of the private sector by nationalizing many production units and isolation of the private sector, were among the major factors which had adverse effects on Iran’s economy. Bani Sadr, who was the then President of Iran said, “India could play an important role in protecting Afghanistan from foreign invarions”.

Naturally, Iran turned towards India for its political support to face super power influence in the region as well as economic embargo by the West. Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the Foreign Minister stated that the strengthening of political relations between Iran and India would ensure stability in the region and keep super power influence out of this.

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26 Hindustan Times. 2 May 1982.
In fact while Iran had borders with Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and the former Soviet Union, it did not have any such borders directly with India and hence there was least chances for any territorial dispute or resultant problems with India. That apart, both the countries had a number of perceptional similarities in terms of foreign policy as well as policy towards the other Asian countries. Hence, Iran became increasingly closer to India.27

Iran regarded India as one of the important non-aligned countries in the region, which could challenge the West. Abolhasan Banisadr, the former President of Iran stated thus:

"India and Iran could co-operate and help28 each other reversing the dependence on the West". As far as Iran was concerned, India had become a model in its struggle against imperialism and colonialism. India looked upon itself and the rest of the emergent Afro-Asian region as force for peace and not as an instrument of power politics in the hands of great powers.

Apart from this, Iran understood that India being the most advanced country technologically in the developing world, with its own atomic power project, space satellite programmes and foreign investments in Africa, South Asia and elsewhere29 while contributing its own technology and manufacturing skills. Thinking on these lines, Iran always placed Indian technology next only to that of USA and the USSR.

27 Dutt V.P. India’s Foreign Policy, New Delhi, 1984, p. 338.
28 Hindustan Times, 11 June 1980, also Indian Express, 11 June 1980.
In the month of June 1980, the Iranian Commerce Minister, Reza Sadr visited India as the head of a high-level delegation. This was the first big delegation sent out by Iran after the revolution. On his visit, the Iranian foreign minister stated:

"Iran had chosen to send the delegation to India not by accident, but by design". The high-level visiting delegation included seven deputy ministers dealing with various economic subjects. This mission also had meeting with the Engineering Export Promotion Council and visited certain industrial units, which manufactured tractors, diesel engines and electronic motors. The delegation kept an open mind and tried to identify the areas where it could safely depend on supplies from Indian source.30

Masoud, the Deputy Minister of Industries and Mines 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". For such ventures, the visiting delegation identified a number of sectors where Indian collaboration might be needed for the implementation of Iran's developmental plans. These ranged from the Indian consultancy arrangements to the employment of Indian technical personnel for training schemes in Iran. Indian consultancy services have been acceptable to Iran since the middle of the sixties of the last century.31

30 Hindu, 10 June 1980, also Indian Express, 10 June 1980.
31 Indian Express, 16 June 1980, also Hindustan Times, 16 June 1980.
During these deliberations, Iran presented a long list of items ranging from food to cement, drugs and spare-parts. Iran also specified an exhaustive list of goods and services that Iran was willing to procure from India. In the meantime, India also expressed its desire to expand the area of collaboration with Iran.

Pranab Mukherjee, the then Commerce and Steel Minister said:

"India was not a participant in the economic blockade of Iran. It pursued a policy of having better co-operation in economic, industrial and technological fields..."\(^{32}\)

In return, there was an assurance from Iran for the continuous supply of oil in future. Although Iran proposed to cut down its oil production from six million barrels to about 3 million barrels a day, of that it needed one million barrels for domestic consumption.

The Iranian Oil Minister made an emphatic statement that India is high on our priority list for oil supplies and will always get special consideration. He also said that because of our good relations with our Indian friends, we kept a reasonable amount (five million tones) for India this year.\(^ {33}\)

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
\(^{33}\) Times of India, 1 March 1980.
Chapter-III

The post 1980 relations between India and Iran had a marked difference. Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the foreign minister of Iran stated in an interview given to Indian Express Daily that Iran was prepared to mediate between India and Pakistan on Kashmir. In the meanwhile, he also praised Pakistan's offer of a no war Pact to India. As far as its relations with India and Pakistan, Iran did not want to show any perceptible tilt towards either India or Pakistan, but only to give the image that Iran was interested in promoting peace, harmony and progress in the sub-continent.

Iranian Foreign Minister visited to India

The visit of the Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati to India in April 1982 had positive impact on furthering the Indo-Iranian relations. In his statement during his visit, Velayati expressed the view that there was need for keeping the super-powers away from the Indian sub-continent and South Asia in general. In order to achieve these aims, it was necessary that India and Iran got closer, surmounting every major problem in their relations. On bilateral relations, he stated that Iran wanted increasingly to seek Indian assistance in the fields of science, technology and industry to free his country from aligning with the West for co-operation. He also said that his wide-ranging talks here had paved the way for considerably expanding economic and commercial relations between the two countries.

35 Indian Express, 2 May 1982.
36 Ibid.
37 Hindustan Times, 2 May 1982.
The visit of Dr. Velayati was extremely fruitful and it created an impression that the bilateral relation between the two countries was growing and becoming matured. Velayati himself emphatically stated that the conditions in India were favorable for India’s co-operation in the reconstruction of the Iranian economy.\textsuperscript{38}

He also made a frank appraisal of Iran’s policy and noted with satisfaction the Iranian effort to expand further relations with India. One of the important points to mention here is that as far as the international issues were concerned, there was greater understanding between the two countries. As far as the regional questions were concerned, both the countries had increasingly uniform viewpoints.

In their joint communique, both Velayati and P.V. Narasimha Rao, the then External Affairs Minister of India expressed serious concern about the situation in Afghanistan and urged all the concerned to work towards a settlement, which would ensure self-determination for the people of Afghanistan and also non-interference by outside forces.\textsuperscript{39}

Another important development was that both the countries talked about the role of the non-alignment movement and its reassertion. The Non-alignment Movement was an independent non-bloc factor and a positive force to strengthen peace and security in the world.

\textsuperscript{38} Indian Express 30 April 1982.
\textsuperscript{39} Statesman, 3 May 1982.
It may be recalled here that during the days of Shah, US presence in the Diego Garcia Islands of the Indian Ocean was appreciated by Iran because Iran was part of the CENTO. However, in the changed circumstances, both Iran and India jointly insisted that the super power presence in the Indian Ocean constituted a threat to peace and increased tension in the region. Both the countries insisted on the implementation of the 1971 UN declaration declaring Indian Ocean a zone of peace.

Regarding the developments in West Asia, both the countries expressed their concern about the Israeli occupation of Golan Heights as it violated the basic principles of international law. On the Iran-Iraq issue, he statement only aid that the Iranian side had briefed the Indian side.

**P.V. Narasimha Rao's Visit to Iran**

In July 1983, P.V. Narasimha Rao made a significant statement, “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”. He made an official visit to Iran from July 18 to 22, 1983. He led a high power delegation, including K. Natwar Singh, Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs and several other officials of that ministry, as well as the officials of the ministers of Information and Broadcasting, Steel and Mines, Finance, Commerce, Education, Culture and Industry. During his visit to Iran P. V. Narasimha

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40 Times of India, 3 May 1982.
41 Ibid., 3 May 1982
42 Tribune, 20 July 1983.
Rao also called on Syed Ali Khamanai, the President of Iran, Mir Hussain Musavi, the Prime Minister, Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Speaker of the Majlis, Asgarowaladi, the Minister of Commerce, Behzad Nabavi, Minister of Heavy Industries and others.

P.V. Narasimha Rao's visit to Iran was a significant step forward towards strengthening and furthering the bilateral relations between Iran and India. He and the Indian delegations were given a warm welcome. The two Foreign Ministers had fruitful discussions and several decisions were taken to explore further possibilities of mutual co-operation.

In April 1984, both India and Iran discussed the possibility of expanding bilateral trade and taking the total turnover too much higher level. This was highlighted when Sheikh-ul-Islam, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran visited India in the same year. The Iranian Minister emphasized that better economic and commercial relations between the two countries would contribute to the economic independence of India and Iran. He also pointed out that it was Iran's policy to purchase as much as possible from India.

Indo Iranian relations took a new shift in 1984. In Dec. 1984 the second session of the Indo-Iranian Joint Commission was held. During this period, Iran had taken increasing interest in the non-alignment movement.

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44 Foreign Affairs Record, Govt. of India, New Delhi, Vol. XXX, No.4, April 1984, p. 138.
45 Ibid.
Hence, both India and Iran had reiterated their firm belief in the important role of the non-alignment movement in the establishment and consolidation of international peace and security.\(^46\) At the conclusion of the Joint Session a resolution was passed towards this effect. At the outset, the statement recorded the deep regret of the government the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Dr. Velayati expressed the hope\(^47\) that the government in India would continue with the ideals of independence and modernization. The statement also recorded appreciation of the Indian government for the Iranian sympathy during the hours of crisis.

Despite the agreement on several vital issues, there existed some difference of opinion regarding the attitude towards the Afghan problem. Hence the two separate paragraphs were used to express the views of Iran and India respectively on Afghan situation in their joint statement. While condemning the presence of foreign occupying forces in Afghanistan, called for the unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces and demanded self-determination for the Afghan people. India on the other hand, reiterated para 114 of the Political Declaration\(^48\) of the 7th Non-aligned Summit and reiterated paragraph 115 through which the non-alignment movement had extended its support to the constructive steps taken by the UN Secretary General for political settlement of the situation in Afghanistan.\(^49\)

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\(^{47}\) Ibid.


\(^{49}\) Ibid.
However, both the countries joined in condemning the continued acts of aggression of Israel and expressed their firm support for the constant and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people until the complete liberation of the occupied lands. India and Iran also declared their support for the popular movements in the struggle against oppression, colonialism and racial discrimination and liberation struggle of the South West African Peoples’ Organization (SWAPO). Both countries called for the independence of Namibia and condemned the racist and aggressive acts of the apartheid regime of South Africa.\(^{50}\)

By 1986, the Indo-Iranian bilateral relations reached a new height. Both Iran and India signed a comprehensive agreement to intensify the area of co-operation further. According to the agreement, India would assist Iran in various fields including setting up of job intensive rural industries\(^{51}\) i.e., satellite communication, textile and agriculture implements factories. This was agreed upon in a document signed at Tehran on 7\(^{th}\) January at the end of a four-day meeting\(^{52}\) of the Joint Commission of the two countries to tap their domestic international markets.\(^{53}\) In return Iran wanted India to set up textile and cement factories. India also accepted an Iranian suggestion to buy cement product at Indian assisted plants. A petroleum delegation was scheduled to visit Tehran by March to renew India’s contract for oil purchase from Iran, a traditional supplier.\(^{54}\)

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50 Indian Express, 10 Dec. 1984.
51 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
Interaction between these two increased. Iran’s Foreign Minister Dr. Velayati for the third time visited India. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation. The two ministers reviewed activities of the Joint Commission and prospects for co-operation in the future. It was agreed that the fourth session of the Indo-Iranian Joint Commission would be held in Delhi at the end of 1986 or 1987 as per mutually convenient dates to be finalized through diplomatic channels. Iranian Economic Delegation to visit India to negotiate oil-leaked trade deal and to work out banking arrangements to facilitate lifting of Iranian oil by India and counter purchase of Indian goods by Iran. Thirdly Iranian also expressed their willingness to buy Indian wheat, rice, meat, corn and different type of steel to which India consented. Fourthly Indian Secretary to review steel in September 1982 relating to Kudremukh Iron Ore Project. Both wanted industrial collaboration regarding power, steel, transport, telecommunications and railways.

In addition to this Project and Equipment Corporation of India (PEC) had made a proposal to send Railway Passenger coaches to Iran. It was agreed that official media should project each other in constructive manner.

In December 1987, a high-level Iranian Industrial delegation led by Heavy Industry minister Behzad Nabavi visited India and met J. Vengal

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55 Foreign Minister of Iran visits India: The Text of Agreed Talks” – Foreign Affairs Record (Government of India, New Delhi), Vol. XXXIV, No.8, August 1986, p. 224.
56 Foreign Minister of Iran visits India: The Text of Agreed Talks” – Foreign Affairs Record (Government of India, New Delhi), Vol. XXXIV, No.8, August 1986, p. 224
Rao, Union Minister for Industry, and Narayana Dutt Tiwari, the Finance Minister. Both the parties agreed that it would consolidate economic relations and open new vistas in heavy industrial sector. A Memorandum was signed wherein transfer of technology and supply of equipment and machinery, consultancy and technical services in the areas of machine building diesel engine manufacturing, equipment for refineries, power plant, cement and sugar were discussed and agreed for mutual co-operation. Iranians also discussed about public and private sector areas like automobiles and components, machine tools, power engines, castings, forging and foundry items.

This mutual co-operation was short-lived because over the Kashmir issue Iran was not happy with India and in 1989 over Iraq's use of chemical weapons on Iran, India had displeasure.

This tension was short lived. In September 1989 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to overcome consular and visa related problems by External Affairs Joint Secretary Naresh Dayal and Iranian Ambassador Ibrahim Rahimpur. Here efforts were made for speedy grant of visas to teachers going to teach in Indian schools in Iran and also to doctors in Iran.

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58 Ibid.
Regarding India-Iran’s renewed relationship no change of governments in either countries came in the way. In fact, in 1990, on the occasion of 11th anniversary of the Islamic revolution, the Fine Arts and Crafts Society of India organized an exhibition on Iranian handicraft in New Delhi. India helped Iran during earthquake. Many Indian companies sent medicines to Iran as a relief mesure.

India praised Ayatollah Khomeini for his revolutionary achievements aimed at destroying imperialist aspirations of Western countries in Iran. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at his death 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 Shia 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. We pay tribute to one who changed the course of history..."

With the coming of the Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee of the Iranian Majlis (Parliament) Saeed Rajai Khorasani to India bilateral relations improved in 1990. This led to improvement in the fields of

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60 Patriot, 12 February 1991.
61 Ibid.
economics, technical know-how and culture. Khorasani stated, "India should take keen interest to improve bilateral economic, technical and cultural relations". During his five-day stay in India, he met the then Prime Minister of India, V.P. Singh, I.K. Gujral, Foreign Minister, George Fernandes, Railway Minister and Shivraj Patil, the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

It was in October 1990, that the Deputy Minister for Petroleum of the Islamic Republic of Iran visited India to participate in the CHEMTECH Conference. They signed agreements, which envisaged construction of Petro-chemical Plants in Iran by the Indian engineers. Iran also signed and agreed to absorb skilled oil sector workers of India displaced from Iraq and Kuwait. The agreement also provided for the training of Iranian personnel in the construction of petroleum plants.

During the early years of the 1990s, due to emerging parallelism in political interests, the complementary economic and technological interests, and a shared perception about evolving geo-strategic environment, relations between India and Iran started improving.

Both India and Iran agreed to substantially increase cooperation in a number of areas including surface transport, shipping, railway system and setting up new power plants.

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63 Kayhan International, 3 November 1990.
64 Ibid.
Iran has asked for India's support to join the World Trade Organization. Iran has even asked for India's help for membership to G-17 and the G-77. During Vice-President Krishan Kant's visit to Cairo in mid-June to participate in the G-15 summit, India was actively instrumental in supporting Iran's admission to G-15.  

As the interests of India and Iran coincide, the two are making conscious efforts to improve ties by keeping up high level contacts. In the later half of 1991, India negotiated for the sale of a 10 mega-watt nuclear reactor to Iran. Despite sharp reactions from the United States, which threatened to torpedo the transfer of American high tech to India, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao said India would not be browbeaten by anyone on the issue of supplying a nuclear reactor to Iran. 

The destruction of the Babri Masjid in India only temporarily affected the relations. Though Iran reacted very harshly to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in India, it did not affect the relations for long. The leader of the Iranian delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference, Mohsen Mojtabahed Shabestari, though urging India to reconstruct the Babri Masjid, evaded with diplomatic ease the question on the impact of the Ayodhya events on relations between India and Iran.

"The demolition was not an act by the Indian government. And now the

67 The Economic Times, May 24, 2000; Indian Express, June 29, 2000
68 Muslim, (Hyderabad), November 17, 1999; Patriot, November 20, 1991; The Hindustan Times, January 16, 1992.
Government has promised to reconstruct the Mosque, we hope that they will keep their promise... Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Iran in 1993 where he told Ayatollah Khomeini that the destruction of the Babri Masjid was an isolated incident and did not impinge on India's secular character. He assured him that the Indian Muslims were very much a part of the national mainstream and decision-making process in India. During his visit, the most important item on the agenda was the gas pipeline project. Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani too made it clear that he had no intentions of interfering in the Kashmir issue. These gestures were enough to suggest that both the countries did not want to hinder their relations because of the Babri Masjid issue.

The desire to improve ties was evident from the high level contacts. The Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati came to India for the sixth session of Indo-Iranian Joint Commission in November 1992. During Rao's visit to Iran in September 1993, there were wide ranging discussions with the Iranian leadership on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern. This was the first prime ministerial visit from India to Iran after the Islamic revolution of 1979 and was characterized by President Rafsanjani of Iran as a turning point in bilateral relations. A joint communiqué was issued and two Memorandums of

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70 Indian Express, April 16, 1993.
71 Pasha, n. 33, p. 228.
72 The Times of India, September 21, 1993.
Chapter-III The Revolution, the Islamic State and the Indo-Iranian Relations

Understanding, on cooperation in science and technology and in surface transport and transit facilities were concluded.

Indian External Affairs Minister Dinesh Singh officially visited Iran in March 1994, and Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati visited New Delhi in January 1995. 75

President Rafsanjani of Iran visited India in April 1995 and a wide range of discussions took place. 76 During his visit, he emphasized the need for strategic cooperation to ward off outside interference and domination in the South Asian and Gulf region. He also underlined the significance of cooperation among Iran, Pakistan, India and China, to forestall any pretext by foreign forces to interfere in the region.

Velayati visited India in January 1996 for bilateral discussions on various political and economic issues. 77 Indian Vice-President K R Narayanan visited Iran in October 1996 and Iranian Majlis speaker Nateq Nouri visited India in November 1996. During this visit, an agreement on the formation of a Joint Business Council (JBC) was signed. 78

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77 Ibid., pp. 44-45.  
In 1989, Indian and Iranian officials had developed a proposal for a pipeline to transport gas from Iran to India. Initially, the proposal did not make an impact but over the last few years, it has become an important part of India's energy strategy. Iran and India are currently engaged in finalising the gas pipeline project for the transportation of natural gas to India. In 1993, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the project. However, the project was put on hold for several years because of Pakistan's inability to take a decision to allow the pipeline to pass through its territory. Tehran, however, believes that an overland pipeline would also provide a viable means of transport for the natural gas resources of Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent through an interconnected pipeline grid via Iran.

Soon after the military takeover, Pakistan sent a green signal to Iran for the pipeline proposal, and it was revived in December 1999. The announcement of support to the pipeline project came during the conclusion of the technical level talks between Pakistani and Iranian Petroleum Ministry officials. The Pakistani delegation assured the Iranians of their support to the pipeline traversing the Pakistani territory to India.

Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh visited Iran in May 2000. His energy diplomacy was aimed at leveraging India's huge dependence on

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80 The Times of India, June 14, 2001.
petroleum products to consolidate the relations with the oil rich nations. The setting up of the Indo-Iranian joint working group (JWG) was part of this diplomacy. The objective of the JWG would be to explore all aspects of energy supplies from Iran to India.

The Indian foreign minister expressed India’s readiness for implementation of the India-Iran gas pipeline project and told Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Mohammad Hossain Adeli, in New Delhi, on November 24, 2000, "Regarding India's dire and rapidly increasing need for natural gas and Iran's rich gas resources, we appreciate the laying of the India-Iran gas pipeline ... I will spare no effort for the expansion of relations with Iran to this end ".

Adeli's response was well in tune with the Indian stance.

The two countries have agreed to study two options (overland and under water) in detail. India is no longer hostile to the overland pipeline and Iran is not dismissing the deep-sea option as too expensive. The two leaders gave a mandate to the joint committee of experts to come up with final set of recommendations. The committee comprises K.V. Rajan, adviser to the Ministry of External Affairs and S.M.H Adeli, Deputy Minister of Economic Relations in the Iranian Foreign Office. The committee will examine all the possibilities, including the overland and

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83 Jaswant Singh, India Pleased with Gas Pipeline From Iran: POT (Iran Series), vol.6, no.9, January 29,2001. p.68
84 Ibid.
under-water routes. The Indo-Iranian joint working group on the gas pipeline has decided to conduct a feasibility study on both onshore and offshore pipelines from Iran to India.\textsuperscript{85}

The option they choose will mark the beginning of a new relationship between India and Iran, built on the solid foundation of energy cooperation, and may prove to be a long-lasting bilateral economic relationship.

Therefore, New Delhi and Tehran are trying to explore all options to ensure safe and cost effective transportation of Iran’s gas resources to India as soon as possible.

Over the years, while the Indian politics remained democratic with only changes of the political parties, during the same period, Iran underwent a fundamentally revolutionary change from monarchy to a revolutionary regime which defined its foreign policy initiatives on the basis of Islamic principles and anti-imperialism. Its anti-imperialist plank had similarities with India’s own non-alignment policy of the 50’s and the sixties. Revolution had infact isolated Iran internationally, but it helped India to get closer to Iran not only commercially and militarily, but also politically. Iran also had to depend on India increasingly.

\textsuperscript{85} The Economic Times, June 13, 2001