CHAPTER I

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY ERA: IRAN AND THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT
The peoples of Iran and the Indian subcontinent, though distinct from each other as social systems today, are yet significantly alike in their historical background. Both Iran and the Indian subcontinent have been nursed by a rich and deeply pervading inheritance of historical evolution, geographical contiguity and socio-cultural identities.

Today, the interaction between Iran and the Indian subcontinent is determined by a variety of factors and situations. The basic factors which influence the actions and reactions of both of these countries can be grouped into geographic, economic, ideological and political. But one thing is clear that these factors do not operate and work in a particular way, because individual perceptions and outlooks of the ruling and opposition elite change from time to time keeping in view of the developments in other parts of world.

Iran occupies an important strategic position in West Asia. The country lies between Turkey in the West and the Indian subcontinent on the East. In the North it has had Russia as its neighbour on both sides of the Caspian Sea. On its southern limits lie the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

Geographically, the Iranian plateau lies like an immense crossroads between Central Asia (itself an extremely important meeting ground for the trade routes and various cultures of the Far East and West Asia) and the Indian subcontinent, Mesopotamia
and Asia Minor. Since about the eleventh century B.C. Indo-European tribes have settled there. The name Iran is derived from the ancient Iranian genitive, plural aryana (Land of the Aryans).\(^1\) The Iranians who gave their name and tongue to the country were originally nomads from Central Asia closely related to the Indians who conquered the subcontinent.\(^2\)

The subcontinent was known to the West by the name of India, a gigantic rhomboid with an area of about 1,575,000 square miles.\(^3\) Now the Indian subcontinent is divided into India, Pakistan and Bangladesh based on their dominant religions. The subcontinent is the greatest land mass of South Asia. To the south, peninsular India represents one of the oldest and least disturbed large land masses in the world. Its rocks have never been extensively covered by the sea since their formation in the pre-Cambrian period over 3000 million years ago, although they include a number of sedimentary strata deposited by rivers under glacial conditions. Between Himalayas lie the Indo-Gangetic plains stretching from the valley of the Indus river in Pakistan.

---


to that of the Brahmaputra in Assam and taking in the deltaic lowlands of Bangladesh. The extensions of the Himalayas almost due south from the Pamirs through the western borders of Pakistan are also of Tertiary origin. Permo-carboniferous rocks dominate the Hindu Kush, while to the south the Khyber pass lies in the sandstone ranges of the safed koh. Further to the south the Baluchistan borderlands fall into two distinct parts. West of 66 degree East weak sandstones predominate in an extension of the Iranian plateau.4

Iran and the Indian Subcontinent: Interaction in Ancient Times

The contact between Iran and the Indian subcontinent goes back to the remote millennium B.C. But the commercial and trade relations between India and Persia5, which preceded the cultural and political relations could be traced back to the third millennium B.C.- the days of Indus valley civilization. The archaeological findings at Mohenjodaro in Sind prove conclusively that the Indus valley civilization had commercial contacts with its contemporaries in Persia and Mesopotamia.6 Harappan traders took pottery, grains, cotton goods, spices etc, to Persia in exchange


5. Modern Iran was earlier known as Persia. In 1935 the Hellenic name of Persia was officially replaced by the indigenous name, Iran.
for metal wares, precious stones and pearls. Early commerce between India and Babylonia, which included Persia was largely carried on via the Persian Gulf, the earliest, probably the oldest, trade route running from the mouth of the Indus to the Euphrates. 7

Trade and maritime activities between India and Persia were also recorded in the Aryan period of history. There are many allusions in Rigveda to the voyages of the Indians, who were experienced sailors in those days and carried on bold ventures on the open seas. The ordinary transactions were carried only by means of barter and the cow formed an important standard of valuation. 8

Whether the intercourse between the two countries continued unbroken since the days of the Aryans down to the historical time is difficult to say, but as early as the eighth century B.C. one finds positive evidences of regular trade relations, both by land and sea, between India and the countries of West Asia, Mesopotamia and Arabia. 9 The Achaemenian dynasty in Persia in the sixth

8. R.C. Majumdar, Ancient India (Delhi, 1968), p.49.
century B.C. created a vast empire embracing nearly the whole of Persia, Asia Minor, Syria, Phoenicia and Egypt and extended its suzerainty over the frontiers of India. This brought India into close contacts with Persia and the Western world and subsequently gave rise to Indo-Persian trade. 10

India and Iran were the two cradles in which the continent of Asia nurtured the Indo-European civilization. India's abiding ties with Iran have been due to similarity of the linguistic affinities, commonality of cultural values and shared techniques of art and crafts. As Jawaharlal Nehru aptly observed, "there are no two countries in the world which, both in their origin and subsequent cultural intercourse, have been so close to each other as India and Iran." 11

There are close resemblances between the language, mythology, religious traditions and social institutions of Indians and Iranians on the one hand, and those of the Greeks, Romans, Celts, Germans, and Slavs on the other. The theory that the Indo-Europeans were one people is based on linguistic evidence which has been successfully tested mainly through archaeological studies in


Western Asia and Eastern Europe. The Indo-European group of languages formerly known as the Aryan or Indo-Germanic group includes most of the languages of Europe, North America, and India. Despite certain anomalies, the linguistic resemblances between the languages in this group can be presented in a convincingly systematized form which indicates a common source. The grammatical forms and the basic words of the vocabulary, like "father" and "mother" and the numerals are strikingly

---

12. Linguistic evidence indicates that the Indo-European families fall into two distinct groups, according to the modification which certain consonants of the present speech underwent change in which hundred is known as centum ("hundred" in Latin), and satem ("hundred" in Avesta). The former group includes the Hellencic, Italic, Teutonic, and Celtic branches, and the latter the Iranian, Indian, Armenian, Balto-Slavic, and Albanian. Some scholars, however, like Sturtevant, have criticized the centum-satem hypothesis. Contemporary philologists attach less importance to this centum-satem divisions since the discovery of a centum language in Central Asia in the tenth century A.D. and the discovery that in the nineteenth century B.C. the Hittites in Asia Minor spoke a language more nearly allied to Latin than to any satem tongue.

It was first thought that the Indo-European languages had arisen out of a parent speech and family trees were constructed. Realizing, however, that this was too much of an oversimplification, scholars later suggested that there was a continuum of diverging dialects, some of which were crystallized into languages. Even this view was exposed to exceptions. The present view is that the Indo-European languages have emerged, assuming divergent forms gradually, through the convergence of a loose and scattered continuum of distinct dialects. Whatever the course and nature of their convergence and divergence may have been, they are certainly interrelated by some common starting point or process.
identical.\textsuperscript{13}

The eastern branch of the Indo-European movement is often referred to as the Aryan movement because the ancient peoples belonging to this group called themselves "Arya" a word which later acquired the meaning of "the noble one".\textsuperscript{14} The Aryans were further subdivided into the Iranians and the Indians. It is inevitable, therefore, that Indian contacts with Iran should be the oldest and the most prolonged. These contacts began in prehistoric times and continued up to the Mughal and modern periods. Situated between the plains of the Euphrates and the Indus, Iran has occupied from the earliest times a position which made her one of the principal routes of commerce, conquest, and civilization. She has, through successive periods of history, influenced the culture of both her eastern and western neighbors, and has provided a bridge between India and the West. The Persian language, like the French in Europe, became the language of

\textsuperscript{13} For a full discussion, see V. Gordon Childe, \textit{New Light on the Most Ancient East}, pp. 3-16. The Florentine merchant, Filippo Sassetti, having lived in Goa for five years between 1583 and 1588 declared that some relationship existed between Sanskrit and the principal languages of Europe. Later, Cocuredoux in 1767, and still later Sir William Jones in 1786 noticed affinities between Latin, Greek and Sanskrit vocabularies and grammars, and put forward the theory of a common origin. The original Indo-European languages, Lithuanian is closest to the basic idiom as reconstructed by comparative philology. Some scholars regard Sanskrit, with eight cases of noun, as well as an extremely complicated verbal structure, as the nearest representative of the parent, highly inflected Indo-European languages.

\textsuperscript{14} The word Arya is also found in the western group.
cultured people over wide areas of Asia. Persian was the court language of medieval India and even today is one of the principal Indian classical languages.\textsuperscript{15}

The close cultural resemblances between India and Iran date from the days of their common Indo-Aryan origin. It seems most likely that the Indians and Iranians lived together for some time, perhaps on the Iranian plateau, before the Indian group moved into India. It is, however, surprising that the cultural link between pre-Aryan India and Iran should have been severed, rather than strengthened, as a result of the migrations of the Aryans into India through Iran.\textsuperscript{16} Although evidence of continued relations between the Vedic Indians and the Iranians is not explicit, there is no doubt that the Vedic religion has much in common with Zoroastrianism, and the Vedic Sanskrit closely resembles the language of the Avesta. The Iranian god, Mithra, who centuries later found his way into the Roman world and became a popular sun God of the Roman troops, and the Vedic Mitra was undoubtedly originally identical. He is invoked as god of light in both religions together with the god of heaven and is called Varuna in the Vedas and Ahura in the Avesta. The beginnings of Zoroastrianism, however, mark a dividing line between the

\textsuperscript{15} Singhal, n.10, p.13.

\textsuperscript{16} R.S. Sharma, \textit{Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India} (Motilal Banarasidass, Varanasi, 1959), pp.75-95.
Vedic and Iranian Aryans. In the Avesta many of the Vedic deities became devils. On the other hand, Ahura, Asura, came to mean "demon" in the Vedas. By changing the relative statures of the gods, Zoroaster endeavored to convert the old polytheism into a spiritual monotheism. Varuna was raised to a position of supremacy, having been invested with the sublime majesty of guardian of the cosmic order (old Persian Asa or Sanskrit Rta) and Indra was relegated to the armies of evil against whom the righteous man must fight on the side of Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrianism was almost contemporary with Buddhism, and it is significant that both religions were a protest against the archaic practices of the old Aryan religions.

The continuous interactions between Iran and the Indian subcontinent brought about a process of accretion among the Aryans and non-Aryans which is known as Aryanization even though pre-Aryan elements later determined the nature of this synthesis.


The acculturation or sanskritisation of the regions beyond Aryavarta was a slow process and continued well into the second half of the first millennium B.C. While Dakshinapatha or the route to the south was mentioned in the later Vedic literature the extent to which the Aryans culture had penetrated the south by the end of the period is uncertain.\textsuperscript{21} The North - West which had moved away from Brahmanical traditions had become relatively isolated from the rest of the northern India. It was the scene of the Persian invasion in 530 B.C. under Cyrus (559 - 530B.C.) and Darius (521 - 486B.C.) the mightiest rulers of Persia. Their great and powerful empire lasted until it was demolished by Alexander in 331 B.C. It is not known exactly how far the Persian empire extended but it is said that the Indian province was the twentieth and the richest satrapy added to the Persian Empire. This period marked a major advance in the history of Iran and in fact in the history of the world, for the Achaemenians conceived Iran as a state and made it a reality. An extensive Persian empire emerged through a series of conquests stretching from the Indus to the Aegean. It included the ancient kingdom of Egypt, Sind and Western Punjab in India, and some Greek city states in Ionia.\textsuperscript{22}

The extension of Persian rule over North-western frontiers

\textsuperscript{21} Francis, n.5, p.75.
\textsuperscript{22} Mujumdar, n.8. p.628.
of India during the sixth century B.C. afforded an opportunity to the people of India and Persia to come close to each other. The impact of Persia on Mauryan India could be particularly traced in the system of administration, palace organization and court etiquette. The Mauryan idea of empire was perhaps inspired by the Iranian example. The imperialism of the Mauryan monarchy especially of Asoka was a synthesis of Indian, Achaemenian and Hellenistic idea. The Mauryan empire was coterminous with the Seleucid Empire of Syria, and Iran, because it included within its boundaries parts of modern Afghanistan and Baluchistan, which belonged geographically to the Iranian plateau.

The Indian national emblem which contains the lions and wheel was borrowed from the Sarnath pillar of Asoka. It is faintly reminiscent of Assyro-Persian prototypes, although clearly modified by Indian sentiment. During the Maurya period the use of stone for columns and statues instead of ivory, wood or clay, is also attributed to Graeco-Persian influence. Some scholars have noticed Iranian influence on Chandra Gupta’s system of communications and in Asoka’s practice of inscribing rocks and columns, although Asoka’s use of such inscriptions to promulgate edicts was profoundly original.

Indian punch-marked silver coinage was on a Persian standard, and the Kharoshti script was derived from Aramaic, used by the Achaemenians in their official documents.24 This Kharoshti script remained in use in the north western region of India until the fourth century A.D. The origin of Maurya court art, however, is a subject of keen controversy, although general opinion appears to favour some Iranian inspirations. Havell, for instance, pointed out that symbolism in Indian art is thoroughly the characteristic of Indo-Aryan thought and he attributed the resemblances between early Indian and Iranian art to the two peoples' common racial origin and imaginative heritage.25 Certainly, differences of form and type separate the Mauryan columns from those of Achaemenian Iran.

The modern term "Hindu" by which the majority of the Indians are now known, is of Persian origin. Indian were known to Persians as the inhabitants of the Sindhu, the Indus River. The Persians softened the initial S to H, then making it "Hindu", a name which has survived and come to be applied in a much wider and more complex sense. The Ionian Greeks, who came to know of India through the Persians, transformed the word into

Indus (\(\text{Indus}\)), and the land of Indus came to be known as India. 26

The ever growing Iran-Indian subcontinent ties were, however, interrupted by the invasion of the Huns, the Gurjars, the Turks and the Arabs after 9th century A.D. particularly the Arab drive towards the East proved to be a severe blow to trade and intercourse between Iran and the Indian subcontinent.

Relations in Medieval Period

It was the advent of Mughals which not only revived but also considerably revitalized the Indo-Iranian relationship. In fact, the medieval period has been regarded as the "Golden Age" of Indo-Iranian relations owing to the large-scale fruitful exchanges that occurred in various fields between both the countries. 27 The Islamic-Iranian influence has left permanent impressions on Indian culture, traditions, language, literature, arts and science.

The rise of the Safavid dynasty and the establishment of the Mughal rule in India in the beginning of sixteenth century constituted a significant landmark in the history of Iran and the Indian subcontinent relations. The establishment of Safavids in Persia and Mughals in India almost synchronized with the rise of

26. The Greeks did not pronounce an initial sharply or clearly, as they did not use a variety sibilants.
Ottomans under Salim I in Asia Minor, Uzbegs under Shaibani Khan in Turan and Ilkhanids in Khurasan. Perso-Mughal relations throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were governed by strategic, political and economic considerations. First, there was Perso-Mughal entente against the Uzbegs and Mongols. The rising power of Uzbegs was a menace to both India and Persia, and Babur made friendship with the Safavid King, Shah Ismail, in order to defeat their common enemy, the Uzbegs of Transoxiana. Commonality of interest, thus, drew them nearer marking the beginning of Perso-Mughal alliance, which survived fifty years notwithstanding occasional stress and strains.28

Iran offered refuge to Humayun who went there having been deposed by Shershah, the Afghan victor, in 1541. It is a well known fact of history that the Persian Monarch helped Humayam to recapture the latter’s kingdom. During his period of exile in Iran, the Mughal Humayun is said to have embraced ‘Twelver Shiism’ perhaps to secure the help of the Safavid Shah Tahmasp. Humayun brought with him Iranian officials, scholars and thousands of soldiers to Delhi. Bayram Khan, the Guardian of Humayun’s son, Akbar (1556-1605), possibly held Twelver beliefs as did Shaykh Gada’i, who was appointed as Sadr al-sudur, the highest religious office in the state. Nur Jahan, the wife of

Jahangir (1605-1627), was of Iranian descent and her father and brother were Shi'is. They both came to hold important official posts.29 Henceforth, diplomatic and cultural contacts between India and Persia became more friendly and frequent, and a stream of Persian travelers, visitors, and migrants began to flow from Persia to India.

The feeling of fraternity and friendship created by Babur's alliance with Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp’s help to Humayun was further strengthened and cemented in the reign of Akbar. Akbar's generosity, tolerance and fair treatment of his subjects consolidated the Mughal Empire and raised the prestige of his dynasty abroad. As a consequence, Shah Abbas of Persia and Abdullah Baig of Turan sought his alliance against each other.30 In fact, conflicting socio-religious and politico-commercial interests of the Ottoman of Asia Minor, Uzbegs of Turan, Safavids of Persia and Mughals of India led to ever-changing alliances. The above narrative, however, should not be taken to mean that Indo-Persian relations during the period were free from frictions and strains. The question of Kandahar became a bone of contention between the Mughals and the Persians for more than a century.


30. N.S. Gorekar, "Indo-Iran Relations During the Mughal Period", Indica, vol.12, no.4, 1975, p.17.
and a half. From Akbar to Shahjahan Kandahar, owing to its international strategic and commercial importance, caused friction and rivalry in Indo-Persian relations throughout the period. It frequently changed hands, first held by Persians from 1622 to 1638, then recovered by Mughals in 1638, who finally lost it in 1649. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, in the Kandahar province the frequent changes of Government between India and Persia fomented dissension and intrigues. Besides the conflict over Kandahar. There was an additional cause of Perso-Mughal rivalry in the seventeenth century namely, the conflicting ambitions of both Mughals and Safavids for exercising suzerainty over the Shi‘i Sultanates in Deccan, Bijapur and Golconda.

Persians were also the much honoured at the Deccan courts. Diplomatic relations between the Safavids and the Deccan rulers date from the reign of Shah Ismail I Shah Tahmasp and Shah Ismail II continued these contacts. Shah Abbar I greatly strengthened these relations by frequent exchanges of embassies. He also arranged for a matrimonial alliance with the Qutb Shahi family.


The close and growing contacts between the Safavids and the Deccan Sultanates were unwelcome to the Mughal emperors. Mughals looked at this with suspicion and displeasure and objected to the inclusion of name of the Safavid ruler in Khutba in Golconda, a practice which the Qutb Shahis had adopted soon after the rise of Shah Ismail in Iran.

Deccan was also the area where Mughal and Persians interests collided. The conflict was political and sectarian. The Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan was founded in about 1347 A.D. by Hasan Gangu Bahmani. Towards the end of the 15th century it broke up into five independent states - Berar, Bidar, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda. But Mughals never recognized them as independent states. These Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan were targets of Mughal territorial ambitions from the days of Akbar. Looking around for support these kingdoms saw in Persia the nearest great power which could counterbalance the constant Mughal pressure upon them. Another tie which bound them to the Safavids was their common religious denomination. The Adil Shahis of Bijapur and the Qutb Shahis of Golconda were already Shi‘i before Akbar launched his aggressive policy in the Deccan. Shah Tahir also maintained active contact with the Safavid court. The Adil Shahis were Shi‘is intermittently and there were periods where Sunnism prevailed in the State religion in Bijapur. It is, however,
notable that the Adil Shahis maintained relations with Persia in their 'Sunni' as well as 'Shi'i' periods.\textsuperscript{35}

Towards the end of Jahangir's rule relations with Persia were not maintained although the Shah of Persia seemed anxious to renew them. No further diplomatic intercourse took place between the two empires until the death of Shah Safi I when Shahjehan sent Jennithar Khan to Persia to gain Persian neutrality for his Central Asian campaigns.\textsuperscript{36}

The Indo-Persian links also were manifested in other fields such as, language painting, music, sculpture, architecture and calligraphy. The impact of Iran on the Indian subcontinent was vividly acknowledged by Mrs. Indira Gandhi who said, "Our speech is punctuated with words of Persian, our speech is interlaced with Persian melodies and the Persian style is clearly seen in many of our historical monuments".\textsuperscript{37} The cultivation of the Persian language in India began during the medieval period not only as state language, but also as a language of the intelligentsia. It reached its zenith during the reign of Emperor Akbar. He made Persian his court language. The two great epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata) were first translated into Persian

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Islamic Culture}, vol.IX, 1934, p.120.

\textsuperscript{37} "Indira Gandhi in Iran on 28 April," \textit{Ministry of External Affairs} (Government of India, New Delhi), May 1974. p.9.
under the orders and royal guidance of Akbar. 38

The continuous exchange of artists and a long fruitful process of synthesis brought about Indo-Persian style of painting and architecture. The new architecture which developed in India was a combination of Indian ideals and Persian vision. The first outstanding monument of the early Mughal style is the Mausoleum of Humayun (Humayun Ka Makbara), built by his widow during Akbar’s reign. She is said to have employed an Iranian architect, Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, who introduced certain Iranian features such as typically Iranian dome, an arched alcove as is found in the royal tombs of Iran, the interior arrangement of corridors, and the complex of rooms. 39 The style of this monument has been described as an Indian interpretation of an Iranian architectural conception. Both in spirit and in structure, Humayun’s tomb is a captivating example of the synthesis of two great traditions of art. 40

Iran, thus, played the same part in the development of the Indo-Islamic art during the sixteenth century as Renaissance Italy did to the art of France. Early in Akbar’s reign, Iranian

40. Ibid.
influence was blended with Indian styles. This fusion is reflected in the mosque and palace buildings at Fatepur Sikri, the capital city, built by Akbar in 1570-1574 on a site near Agra. These buildings form a brilliant complex, with broad terraces and stately courtyards surrounded by numerous palaces and pavilions. The most imposing building is the Jama Masjid; its finest features are the 176 feet tall southern gateway, the Buland Darwaza, which is made of marble and sandstone, and is architecturally the most perfect gateway in India, and the largest of its kind in the world. Indeed, the buildings at Fatehpur Sikri constitute one of the most spectacular structural achievements in the whole of India. The style of Fatehpur Sikri is mature in every respect, fully absorbing Iranian elegance into the exactness of Indian workmanship. A monument to Akbar's original vision it is, after the Taj Mahal, the most notable architectural achievement of the Mughals.41 According to a French critic, Grousset it "is the soul of Iran incarnate in the body of India."42

The Mughal era was followed by the emergence of European powers in Iran and British rule in India. British brought a cloud over this cultural traffic. Indo-Iranian contacts suffered a decline as the British rule concentrated itself in forging

41. Ibid. p.181.
42. Quoted in Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India (Calcutta, 1946), p.162.
links with the West. British India did not bother about Indo-Iranians affairs. The Pahlavi regime, which came to power in Iran in 1921, was characterized by a closer interest in the affairs of India. In keeping with this new found interest Rabin­dranath Tagore visited Iran in April 1932 at the invitation of Reza Shah.43

Modern Times

With advent of the British power in India till Indian independence in 1947 Indo-Persian relations were basically political in nature, due to the geo-strategic and political interests of British Government of India in Persia. Once the British consolidated their position in India, after the battle of Plassey (1757) India became the shining jewel in the imperial crown.44

Having acquired firm control over India, the British moved on to safeguard this prize-possession by creating a chain of protective outposts in the West Asian region. In this process, Afghanistan and Iran were turned into a buffer between British India and Russia. The geographical situation of Persia between the rapidly expanding Russian empire on the one side and Great Britain on the other cast it into a buffer state and made it a


predominant factor in the British strategy of defence of India. 45

The importance of Persia in the defence of British India can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In 1798, the Marquis of Wellesley took the first step to bring Persia into the orbit of Indian foreign policy, 46 when he sent Mehdi Ali Khan to Tehran to find out the Shah's attitude towards the aggressive designs of Zaman Shah of Afghanistan. 47 While the Afghan threat was one of the original compelling motives for British contacts with Persia, the dominating factor which closely identified Persia with the imperial interests in India was the impending danger of French invasion of India. Pursuing his grand strategy of world domination and break-up of the British Empire, Napoleon, in 1798, had dispatched emissaries to the court of the Shah of Persia to pave the way for the passage of the French army to the Indian subcontinent, but their mission failed. 48 The French danger to India was gone with Napoleon, but the fact that he had toyed with the impracticable scheme of invading India, in collusion with Russia and Persia, loomed large in British calculations for the defence

45. Ibid.


47. Ibid.

The emergence of Russia as a supreme power in Eastern Europe after Napoleon's star had set and Russia's advances in Central Asia posed a much greater threat to British interests in India. Throughout the nineteenth century Russia and Britain clashed repeatedly in Iran to secure imperial privileges for one sort or another. Rivalry between Britain and Russia for Iran reached a high point by the turn of the 20th century. According to a treaty signed by Britain and Russia in 1907 these powers divided Iran into two "Zones of influence". Britain acknowledged Iran's northern and central province as Russian zone, while Russia acknowledged Iran's southern province as British zone. The stage was set for a long duel between Russia and Britain, and that was the determining factor in the Central Asiatic question and Indo-Iranian relations till the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. A new era began in the bilateral relations between Iran and the Indian subcontinent following the


50. Sykes, n.46, pp.300-10.


52. For details see Bisheshwar Prasad, Foundations of India's Foreign Policy: Imperial Era, 1882-1914 (Calcutta, 1974), pp.316-383
partition of the latter land mass into India and Pakistan on the basis of the two-nation theory.

Iran - Pakistan Relations

Iran was the first country that recognized Pakistan as an independent state and the Shahinshah of Iran was the first Head of State to pay a state visit to Pakistan in March 1950.\(^5\) When the Quaid-i-Azam appointed Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan as the first Pakistani envoy to Iran in May 1948, the Quaid told him that he was going to a country which already had the most cordial relations in the world with Pakistan.

Pakistan and Iran owe their close bilateral relations to the geographical location. Their territorial contiguity creates many common interests. Pakistan inherited about 590 miles of a common frontier with Iran. The boundary which was partially demarcated, runs from the Koh-i-Malik Siah, the tri-junction of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, to Gwatar Bay, in the Arabian Sea.\(^5\) Pakistan's border with Iran is also an imperial legacy. Some parts of Baluchistan had been under Iranian suzerainty before the advent of the British Raj. Britain, after conquering Baluchis-

\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^5\) The Shahinshah of Iran at the banquet given in his honour on March 1950, said: "The divine code states that Muslims are brothers. This, with God's grace, is most time in the case of Iran and Pakistan."Pakistan Horizon (Karachi), First Quarter, November 1968, pp.40-44.
tan, entered into border agreements with Iran in 1871, 1896 and 1905. But the Baluch-Irani boundary remained largely undemarcated. 55

As a result of confusion about boundaries existing during 1947-49, some minor border clashes occurred which were never serious enough to be reported by the press. Neither Pakistan nor Iran ever made any public statements on border issues. In 1955, the two countries agreed to submit their boundary problem to the arbitration if direct negotiations between them failed to produce agreement. To expedite the demarcation on large scale maps of the entire border area, clearly indicating frontier pillars, were approved by the governments of Pakistan and Iran. 56 Both governments were equally anxious to remove this block. The Iranian envoy observed on December 26, 1955, "we will never make boundary matters an issue between the two countries as we are very friendly." 57 Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran, Major-General N.A.M. Raza, was equally optimistic and visualized "no difficulties and no hitches" in the demarcation of the frontier. On October 30, 1956, it was reported that complete agreement on the demarcation


56. The Iran-Pakistan boundary is known as the 'Goldsmid Line' after the name of the Chairman of the Perso-Baluch Commission of 1871, Major-General Frederick J. Goldsmid, See Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, vol.XI, (Calcutta, 1930), p.371.

of their boundaries had been reached between the two countries. By October 1957 the Pakistan Cabinet had completed consideration of the draft agreement, and it was formally approved and signed on February 6, 1958. The implementation of the unpublicized agreement, however, was delayed until the advent of the military regime in October 1958, which then gave it top priority. The task of demarcating the line by erecting boundary pillars was completed on February 10, 1959, a year after the signing of the accord.\textsuperscript{58}

Another was related to the problem of Baluchi dissidents within Pakistan. Pakistan and Iran have collaborated or almost acted as a "federation" or "confederation" on the issue of Baluchistan. Baluchistán is a problem province of Pakistan. Under the British rule as well as after the formation of Pakistan, it was treated as a special administrative region. Ethnically, Baluchistan is inhabited by Baluchis, Brohis and Pathans speaking Baluch, Brohi, Pushto and Jatki dialects respectively.\textsuperscript{59} The Baluchi population is spread out in the areas of Iran and Afghanistan as well, Iran, therefore is interested in the Baluch problem of Pakistan both as a domestic problem and as a problem vis-a-vis Afghanistan. The persistent demand of Baluchis for a separate state is looked upon with concern by both Iran and

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., December 27, 1955.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., February 1959.
Pakistan.

In 1955, the Pakistan National Assembly passed the West Pakistan Act which provided for the merger of its four provinces the Punjab, the North West Frontier, Sind and Baluchistan into "one unit". The Act established the predominance of Punjabis, a fact much resented by the people of other provinces. A movement in Baluchistan was launched against this arrangement. It was as late as in 1970 that Baluchistan got its first provincial government led by the National Awami Party (NAP). This victory, however, proved to be short-lived. In 1973, the NAP-led Government was dismissed and it was believed that Pakistan did it at the instance of the Shah of Iran. The presence of Iranian helicopters in Baluchistan shortly after the dismissal indicated that a state to state co-ordination had already begun regarding the border province.60

During his interview to the New York Times (two months after the dismissal of the Ministry), in response to the question, what if Pakistan fell apart?, the Shah was reported to have said that in that case Iran would take a kind of "protective reaction" in Baluchistan.61 Similar statement was repeated by the Shah in an interview to an Indian weekly.62

The quest for national security, the search for friends and allies and the anxiety to maintain territorial integrity led both Iran and Pakistan to be constant partners. For Iran as well as Pakistan the security vis-a-vis the Soviet Union was an important element in their foreign policies. The geographical destinies of Iran and Pakistan have been linked historically with those of 'Northern Tier' countries. All calculations at the regional and global levels, concerning strategy and geo-politics have placed both countries in the same bracket. Furthermore, these calculations drew Iran and Pakistan into the vortex of superpower rivalry. It is interesting to note that despite the transition in international politics from a bipolar to flexible balance of power system, Pakistan and Iran found themselves on the same side of the fence. Both looked to the West in their period of consolidation and they were united in their adherence to the Baghdad Pact in 1955, later known as the CENTO. In 1959 both Pakistan and Iran signed defence agreements with the United States on bilateral basis.


64. Horward Wriggins, "Changing Power Relations between the Middle East and South Asia", Orbis (Philadelphia), Fall 1976, pp.787-88.


Pakistan's additional security concerns have been India and Afghanistan, the two countries with whom it shares most of its frontiers. A cursory look at the map of Pakistan indicates that roughly half of Pakistan's land frontier is with India, about 1/3 with Afghan, approximately 1/6 with Iran and a very small strip (through the Pakistan-controlled Kashmir) with China. The USSR was also very close to it.

From the beginning the main concern of Pakistan's foreign policy has been security against India. Mohammad Ayub Khan mentions in his autobiography about his task as Commander-in-Chief of Pakistan Army: "Our first concern was the defense of Pakistan against possible aggression by India". Keith Callard writes that Pakistan's "foreign policy has been dominated by one continuing factor, the desire for protection against India. On this issue nearly every political leader is agreed."

Against the background of the bitterness caused by partition there was no dearth of issues leading to hostilities, fear and mistrust between the two countries. Notable among those were the


68. Ibid.

refugee problem, evacuees' property, minorities problem, water disputes, and the status of Kashmir. The Kashmir issue led to three wars between India and Pakistan.

Religion provided another bond of friendship between Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan, geographically located in South Asia belongs to West Asia by religion and to South Asia by culture and tradition.\(^{70}\) Liaquat Ali Khan, during his stop over at Tehran on his way back home from London in May 1949, remarked: "My hope for the future is that Iran and Pakistan will be like one soul in two bodies....All the Muslim countries are our brothers, but Iran is closest to our heart."\(^{71}\) The Shah, who returned this visit in March 1950, stated at the banquet given in his honour by the Governor General of Pakistan: "what could be more natural than love between the two nations that are neighbours and profess the same faith. Iran will never forget the affectionate regards and sincere feelings of this sister and co-religionist nation."\(^{72}\)

The Baghdad Pact resulted in the formal involvement of Iran


\(^{71}\) Zubeida Mustafa, "Recent Trends in Pakistan's Policy Towards the Middle East", *Pakistan Horizon* (Karachi). Fourth Quarter, 1975, p.2.

in a military alliance with one of the countries of the Indian subcontinent. Iran gave diplomatic support to Pakistan over Kashmir. In the Iranian Majilis, Kashmir was discussed as an inseparable part of Pakistan. Deputy Speaker Sayed Ahmed Sarai said: "We believe the decision of the Security Council should be binding ... and the Kashmir issue settled through plebiscite under the auspices of United Nations. It is, however, regrettable that India on the one hand criticized even defense arrangements as envisaged in the Baghdad Pact and on the other hand believed in the outmoded maxim of might is right." In 1962, Iran volunteered to act as a mediator between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue but the tilt was clearly in Pakistan's favour. Iran's Foreign Minister, Ardeshir Zahedi, for instance, declared that "Iran had been telling India to solve the Kashmir problem with Pakistan on the basis of self-determination". Iran also helped to restore diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan after a break of two years. King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan was persuaded to tone down his support for the "Pakhtoonistan" issue.

Iran's attitude and actions in both the Indo-Pak wars

---

74. Dawn (Karachi), 22 December 1955.
75. The Patriot (New Delhi), 16, July 1962.
showed a pro-Pakistan tilt. The first instance of military assistance from Iran to Pakistan was manifest during the 1965 Indo-Pak war. Iran considered the defence of Pakistan as its own defence. Abdur Rasul Azimi, the editor of Paigham-i-Imroze, clearly stated that, "Iran came out to help Pakistan against Indian aggression with full consciousness that it was helping the defence of its own country".76 The official Iranian circles also confirmed this position. A statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Ministry declared that Iran was concerned with India's aggression against Pakistan, a fraternal Muslim nation.77

Throughout the war, Iranian authorities were in constant touch with Pakistani officials and aided Pakistan both diplomatically and materially.78 At the United Nation General Assembly the Iranian representative declared on 14 October 1965 that any "settlement to be durable must be achieved not on the basis of political expediency but mainly on the basis of the principle of self-determination to which both parties had previously subscribed".79 In the war, Iran's aid to Pakistan was mainly con-

76. Safia S. Mohammadally, "Pakistan-Iran Relations (1947-1979)," Pakistan Horizon (Karachi), vol.39, no.9, 1979, pp.54-55.
79. Echo of Iran (Tehran), vol.13, no.199, 13 September 1965, p.3.
fined to medical supplies and medical teams. Besides this, Iran also provided shelter to the PIA fleet and other Pakistani civilian aircraft. The PIA aircraft were garaged each night at Tehran from where they operated the essential defence measures.\textsuperscript{80}

Unlike in 1965, Iran did not denounce India as an aggressor in the Indo-Pak war of 1971. Nonetheless, India was condemned for armed intervention in the internal affairs of Pakistan. The Iranian Foreign Minister's statement in the UN General Assembly on 7 December reflected this stand. He said: "No matter how grave has been the situation of Pakistan with regard to the humanitarian question of refugees, nothing can justify armed intervention on the part of India against the territorial integrity of Pakistan. To approve such an action or to cover it up by silence and convenience would be tantamount to undermine the very foundation of the system of international relations upon which our organization is based".\textsuperscript{81}

Iran considered the territorial integrity of Pakistan as a matter of grave concern to its own security. As the Shah said in an interview to the editor of Blitz: "An Indo-Pak settlement


is the first imperative not only for the security development and prosperity of the Indian subcontinent but also of the neighbouring region and particularly Iran".\(^{82}\) The same idea was conveyed in the address of the Iranian Foreign Minister to the UN General Assembly on 27 September 1971 when he observed: "Recent developments in the relations between India and Pakistan are of grave concern to us. The separatist movement in East Pakistan and the subsequent flight of refugees to India have strained to a critical point the already tense relations between the two countries. We support every effort under the banner of UN to deal with the humanitarian aspect of the problem on both sides of the borders. As to the political aspect of the problem without wishing in any way to interfere in the affairs of Pakistan, we are confident that the Pakistan government will do its utmost to eliminate through pacific means the causes of friction and strife which brought panic and unhappiness among brothers in Pakistan".\(^{83}\)

This war flared up not from any conflict between the two neighbor, but from Pakistan's internal anomalies. The internal state imperialism, i.e. the exploitation of East Pakistan by its

---

western counterpart in the economic, political and cultural spheres of life had begun to tell on Pakistan's internal stability. When the demand for a separate state was going on in East Pakistan the Shah observed: "President Yahya Khan must remember the basic canons of history, firstly that the interest of the majority must remain the overriding consideration where the majority of people were impoverished, secondly, the rich should not be permitted to become richer at the expense of the unprivileged, finally, world was heading towards social justice and Pakistan could not remain silent in this movement". Further, he also added that he did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan. However, as a friend of the country, he would say that General Yahya Khan must introduce the necessary reforms before elections were held and top priority must go to uncomprising fight against corruption.84

The actual crisis began in March 1971, after the refusal of President Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) to allow the Awami League, who had won the mandate in the December 1970 elections, to form the government under the leadership of Sheik Mujibur Rehman and to implement its six-point programme. When the triangular negotiations between Yahya Khan, Bhutto and Mujibur Rehman failed, the

Army cracked down on East Pakistan on 25 March 1971.

During the initial days of the crack down Iran took the stand that the developments in Pakistan were an internal matter of that country and a spokesman of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, in a statement on 29 March 1971, strongly advised all powers to refrain from entering in the internal affairs of Pakistan in the period of crisis.85 On 16 June, the Iranian Foreign Minister visited Karachi to deliver a message from the Shah to Yahya Khan. On his return, he expressed Iran's full support to Pakistan.86

As a result of Yahya's reign of terror, there was a massive influx of refugees from East Pakistan into India, threatening its social and economic structure and straining to a critical point its already tense relations with Pakistan. The Indian Government sent several emissaries to brief various countries on the developments in East Pakistan and to mobilize world public opinion for the safe return of refugees. T.N. Kaul, the then Foreign Secretary, was sent to Iran in April 1971 to impress upon the Shah the dangers of the continuance of Pakistan's policy in East Pakistan.87 This was followed by the visit of the then Minister for Industrial Development, Moniual Haq Chowdhury, in June 1971.

85. Times of India (New Delhi), 18 April 1969.


with a special message from the Indian Prime Minister for the Shah. He and the Iranian government were apprised of the seriousness of the situation on India's eastern borders. Tehran maintained a cautious balance between its support to Pakistan and its sympathy with India. The sympathy was expressed on the question of refugees for which Iran called for a humanitarian solution.88

Iran also offered to mediate between India and Pakistan over the East Pakistan issue,89 but India declined to respond to the offer. The then Minister of External Affairs, Swaran Singh, told the Lok Sabha: "The question of mediation or good offices of any third country did not arise as the issue of Bangladesh is a matter between the military junta of West Pakistan and already elected representatives of East Bengal and not between India and Pakistan".90

Iran went all out in support of Pakistan when hostilities broke out between India and Pakistan in December 1971. This included providing Pakistan with military and logistic support during the war. Iran rendered considerable help to Pakistan.91


Pakistan airline planes and other civilian aircraft were not only allowed to take shelter in Iran but also permitted to fly to bring essential supplies from other countries friendly to Pakistan. Iran offered modern fire-fighting equipment and experts when the oil tanks in Karachi were hit by the Indians. Iran also promptly met critical shortage of ammunition and aircraft when Karachi was blocked. Iran also reportedly gave help in maritime air reconnaissance and also offered a fully equipped military hospital.92

Iran's Ambassador in the United Nations agreed that "an immediate end of military operation, an unconditional ceasefire, should be followed by withdrawal of troops from the territories occupied by both sides."93 This stand, calling for a ceasefire and withdrawal first and a settlement of the refugees thereafter, was supportive of Pakistani's position. Support to Pakistan was expressed outside the United Nations also.94

Iran's support to Pakistan on post-war issues was also total. In early 1972, Iran joined Pakistan in refusing to acknowledge the latter's breakup as final. The joint communique

93. Ibid.
issued after the Shah's visit to Pakistan in January 1972 said that "future relations between the two wings of Pakistan should be resolved through negotiations between their elected leaders." The communique also called for the withdrawal of Indian troops from occupied Pakistani territories.95

On 23 September 1972, the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Hoveida, declared that his country was against the hasty admission of Bangladesh into the United Nations and emphasized the need to settle the POWs issue in order to normalize the situation in the subcontinent. The joint communique, issued after President Bhutto's visit to Iran in May 1973, expressed deep concern over the plight of 93,000 prisoners of war and 12,000 civilians, as their continued detention by India was in "flagrant disregard" of the United Nations resolutions. It also regarded the threat of trial of some prisoners of war by the "Dacca" authorities as a step that would undermine normalization in the subcontinent.96

As regards the recognition of Bangladesh, Iran publicly stood behind Pakistan by not recognizing the break away state until Pakistan had itself done so in February 1974.97

economic front, Iran came forward to help Pakistan resolve its
difficulties aggravated due to loss of the domestic market of
East Pakistan and inflated oil bills 98 In addition to this, Iran
gave loans to Pakistan worth $580 million and $150 million.
The loan of $580 million was the largest that Iran had extended
to any country except Egypt.99

**Iran and India**

Iran's relations with India grew slowly. An air transport
agreement was concluded on 24 November 1948.100 A fillip to this
friendship was given by "the treaty of perpetual peace and
friendship" signed on 18 March 1950 at Tehran between India and
Iran "pledging both the countries to settle any difference
through ordinary diplomatic channel or by arbitration or other
peaceful means. The treaty referred to the ancient ties which
existed between the two countries for centuries, and keeping in
view the mutual need for co-operation."101 Moreover, India was
critical about the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
in 1951 by the Mossadeq government. In a letter to Chief Minis-
ters, Jawaharlal Nehru said that the Iranian government has taken

100. *Kessing's Contemporary Archives*, vol.7, December 1948,
p.9672.
101. See the Text of Treaty in Foreign Policy of India, *Text of
up a very strong and unbending attitude and perhaps it might be criticized to some extent.\footnote{Jawaharlal Nehru Letters to Chief Ministers 1947-64, vol.2, (Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Teen Murti House, New Delhi), p.438.} Inspite of this critical stand a Consulate General at Nashed in Iran was opened by India in December 1952 and a direct radio-telephone service between the countries was inaugurated on 1 March 1952.\footnote{Annual Report 1952-53 (Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, New Delhi, 1953), p.10.} Besides, the government of India also entered into a comprehensive trade agreement with Iran on 15 December 1954, known as "the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation." In the cultural field, the Education Minister of India, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad paid a goodwill visit to Iran in August 1951. A party of two Iranian professors and eight students visited India in April 1952 for study of some of the veterinary institutions of India. Two Deputy Ministers of External Affairs went on a goodwill mission to Tehran in 1953, and a press delegation from Iran visited India in January 1953.\footnote{India Parliamentary Debates, vol.1, no.4, part 1, 15 February 1953, Col.149.}

Iran gave assurances to India that its closeness to Pakistan, as a result of common membership of the Baghdad Pact, was not directed against India and it was not at the cost of friendship with India. The visit of the Shah to India in 1956 just four months after Iran's adherence to the Baghdad pact was a
clear indication of his desire to mend the fences of friendship with India. This was his first and one of the longest trips that any Head of State has made to this country. The Shah stayed in this country for 23 days, from 16 February to 9 March 1956. He did refer to 'difference between India and Iran but made it a point to emphasize the traditional ties. The Shah, while speaking at a banquet given by the Governor of Bombay, said:

"our community of thoughts and sentiments have been expressed many times in same language, sometimes in different language, but having always the same meaning.... The meeting of responsibility for the human being, responsibility for the right of individual, and also in different ways responsibility for the freedom and independence. Having so many plans in common and having both peace, fraternity, you in your country in this part of world..... we in Iran in slightly different geographical situation, I am sure are trying to do the same thing to preserve and continue the legacy of our ancestors".105

India’s intentions of friendship with Iran, despite the latter’s membership of the Baghdad Pact, were also manifested by the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1959, and of Dr. Radhakrinan to Iran in 1963. All these visits helped the two countries to come closer to each other. The bilateral cultural agreement of 1956, the treaty of commerce and navigation of 1957 and three-year trade agreement of 1964 were steps in the same directions.106

-------------


Iran also made efforts to convince India that its friendship with Pakistan was not based on anti-Indian sentiments. A few months after the war of 1965, while stressing Iran's ties with Pakistan, the Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, speaking in the General Assembly, laid stress on his country's ties with India. He observed that "Iran has always maintained friendly relations with India and its cultural ties with India can be traced back to the beginning of history." The Shah of Iran himself took pains to clarify Iran's stand on arms aid to Pakistan. In an interview with the editor of Blitz, he said that "there is no truth in any reports which suggest that Iran is to give large scale military aid to Pakistan". Iran's sympathy with Pakistan, he said, was intended to refrain the latter from jumping into the Chinese lap. "Pakistan will get all the arms it wants, not from Iran, but from elsewhere and you know from where. We want to prevent such a situation". Iran did not stop the flow of oil to India during the two Indo-Pak wars. When the Tashkent Declaration was signed between India and Pakistan on 10 January 1966, the Iranian government, welcoming the Declaration, expressed the hope that "both India and Pakistan will resolve their differences peacefully and amicably".

Another important point was that the economic factor brought Iran and India closer to each other for mutual benefit. The visit of the Shah to India in 1969 was motivated by economic consideration of finding diversified source of techniques, Indian know-how and joint collaborations to assist Iran in its ambitions and industrially oriented Five-Year Plan in March 1968.\textsuperscript{110} To give effect to mutual desires of increasing collaboration between them, an Indo-Iran Joint Commission for economic, trade and technical cooperation at the ministerial level was set up during the Shah's visit.\textsuperscript{111} A grand welcome was accorded to the Shah during his visit to the modern temples of India at Heavy Engineering complex, Hindustan Steel Limited, Integral Coach Factory, Bhabha Atomic Centre etc. During his visit to India he emphasized his desire to build close relations with India by making two offers. First, he offered two trade routes, one to Europe and the other to Russia via Iran as a gesture of help to India to overcome the problem which arose after the closure of the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{112} Secondly, for peace in the region, he offered to mediate between India and Pakistan if both countries desired it. He also said: "I shall be the happiest man in the world if I

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} National Herald, 4 January 1969.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Times of India, 14 January 1969.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Foreign Affairs Record, Ministry of External Affairs (Government of India, New Delhi), vol.15, no.4, April 1969, p.87.
\end{itemize}
could do something to bring India and Pakistan closer".  

India, on its part, also made efforts to forge close relations with Iran. Indo-Iranian negotiations on the Madras Refinery were successfully concluded and an agreement was signed in November 1965, providing not only for a continued supply of Iranian crude for the refinery but also $30 million in hard currency for the construction of the refinery. The visit of the Indian Deputy Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, with an economic delegation to Iran proved to be a shot in the arm of Indo-Iranian economic cooperation. Negotiations were started for Rs. 2.060 million Indo-Iranian chemical and industrial complex to be set up in Gujarat. Desai's visit also paved the way for the visit of the Shah to India which came about in January 1969.

Indo-Iranian relationship reached its zenith particularly since 1973. A major breakthrough was achieved between two countries during Foreign Minister Swaran Singh's visit to Iran from 19 to 22 July 1973. During the visit, widely regarded as the "turning point" in Indo-Iranian relations, Swaran Singh held


115. Singh, n.92, p.162.


117. Lok Sabha Debates (New Delhi), vol.30, no.17, 16 August 1973, Col.60.
discussions with Iranian leaders including an audience with the Shah. As a result of the visit which was aimed at highlighting the mutuality of interests between India and Iran, a new protocol for trade and technical cooperation was signed, and it was decided to hold the fourth meeting of the Indo-Iran joint commission, which had not met since December 1970.

The visit helped not only in widening mutual cooperation between the two countries, but also marked the evolution of a mature relationship based on political understanding. The Indian Foreign Minister was understood to have told the Consultative Committee of the Parliament later that "India could not write off Iran or vice versa because of the arms buildup by the country and its close relations with Pakistan. Even though Iran is a friend of Pakistan, there is scope for expanding commercial and economic relations". He also added that "it (the visit) greatly cleared up the atmosphere and proved to be the starting point of fruitful cooperation between the two countries". A new trend was seen towards the emergence of a mature relationship independent of the two countries' respective strategic interests, as was evident from the statements of the Foreign Ministers of


120. Times of India, 23 August 1973.
both the countries:

"Iran's friendship with Pakistan and India's friendship with Iraq like Iran's close association with the United States and India's treaty relationship with the Soviet Union need to be viewed as something incompatible with the desire for better relations." 121

Swaran Singh's visit was followed in quick succession by the visit to India of Princess Ashraf, the Shah's sister on 26 August 1973, and that of Foreign Minister, Abbas Ali Khalatbari, in December 1973. 122 Khalatbari described the Indo-Iranian relations as "very close and friendly" and looked forward to having them still closer. 123 A cultural agreement was signed during the visit. 124 The exchange of visits culminated in the visit of Mrs. Gandhi to Iran in April 1974 and the Shah's return visit in October that year. These visits marked the evolution of mature relationship based on political understanding. Pointing this out Kayhan International in its editorial commented that "suspicions entertained on both sides a year ago have blown away. There is feeling that concrete interests both of trade and of state, bind the two nations together". The speeches of the Prime

---


122. Foreign Affairs Record (Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, New Delhi), vol.19, December 1973, pp.5-16.


Ministers of both the countries reflected this understanding. Speaking at a banquet given in her honour on 29 April 1974 Mrs Gandhi said: "It was short-sighted to seek exclusive relationship, friendship with one group of countries should not mean hostility for another". The Iranian Prime Minister stated that "no cloud of suspicion or misunderstanding can mar the atmosphere of Indo-Iran relations". The Shah also spoke of his sincere desire to establish the closest possible relations with India. He even went to the extent of saying that he could not find better goodwill and better understanding during any conversation with any other responsible leader of any country than India.

These visits also helped in fostering economic cooperation between the two countries. They resulted in the preparing of a blueprint for economic cooperation covering a wide range of fields. Iran sought to provide cushion to the shock felt by India as a consequence of oil price hike by stepping up imports from India besides extending soft loans for the development of the production capacity of the Kudremukh iron ore project, setting up an aluminium plant for export to Iran, and for the set-

126. Ibid.
127. Ibid.
ting up of an Indo-Iranian joint shipping line with the initial capacity of 500,000 tones.\textsuperscript{128} India, on its part, agreed to push up the export of the much-needed iron and steel. It was also agreed to provide technical personnel, engineers, professors and doctors for service in Iran.\textsuperscript{129}

The increasing Indo-Iranian collaboration was well evidenced by a number of joint industrial projects such as an aluminium plant in India and a petroleum and power station in Iran, the formation of a joint chamber of commerce, the conclusion of a five-year trade deal (September 1974) and twenty years contract for the purchase of 7.5 million tonnes of iron ore a year from India.\textsuperscript{130}

The drastic changes in the mutual relationship between Iran and India could be seen in the context of various developments in the subcontinent as well as in the Persian Gulf. With the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, and the consequent dismemberment of Pakistan, New Delhi had been able for the first time since 1947 to rid itself of its rather unhealthy pre-occupation with Pakistan and the Indo-Pak power balance. This pre-occupation had kept India tied down to the subcontinent and prevented it from playing an effective role in the wider area of international

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Patriot} (New Delhi), 3 May 1974.

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Statesman}, 25 September 1974.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., For details see \textit{Tribune} (Chandigarh), 30 September
affairs commensurate with its size, geo-strategic location and potential resources. This state of affairs had admirably suited some external powers, since it had adversely affected India’s aspirations to become an autonomous decision-making centre in this part of the world. It had also prevented India from emerging as a "subject" rather than a mere "object" in the arena of global politics. After 1971, when the futility of Pakistan’s search for power-parity had been demonstrated beyond doubt and India had emerged as the pre-eminent power in the subcontinent, New Delhi could afford to see and formulate its policy towards other countries relatively independent of the "Pakistan factor." This did not, however, mean the complete elimination of the "Pakistan factor" from Indian foreign policy considerations. In fact, Pakistan still looms large in the Indo-Iranian equation. Nevertheless, it did mean that other factors were also given their due weight in the assessment of bilateral relationships. An India, more sure of itself than before, could now afford to take in its stride the close relations between Iran and Pakistan and not allow that equation to distort its assessment of Iran and the economic and political dividends that New Delhi could achieve by developing close relations with Tehran.

At the same time, Iran’s regional environment also underwent a change following the British withdrawal from the Arabian peninsula and the Persian Gulf and Iran’s ambitious bid to assume
Britain's responsibilities in the region. The emergence of Iran as the more dynamic and dominant partner was further confirmed when following the oil embargo and the subsequent increase in oil price. Iran began to cultivate regional supremacy. In order to achieve its goal in the Gulf, it was imperative for Iran to ensure a stable eastern flank so that its energies did not get diverted at this critical juncture. Iran was, therefore, willing to go out of its way at this stage to underwrite Pakistan's integrity and to augment Pakistan's strength.

Iran's apprehensions were compounded by the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971, the emergence of Bangladesh and the consequent dismemberment of the old Pakistan. In the words of Hottinger, "some circles in the Iranian capital city had voiced the opinion that the sequence of events fitted into a pattern of long-term Soviet plans for the encirclement of Iran". The Shah felt that the break-up of Pakistan was accomplished by India with Soviet military hardware and the treaty ensured Moscow's future

131. The process began in 1961 with the independence of Kuwait. The British then withdrew from South Yemen in 1967 and in 1971 from the Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar. In 1977 it withdrew from Oman as well.


133. Ibid.

support to India. In an interview, he linked the Indo-Soviet treaty with the break-up of Pakistan and said that "we suddenly saw the divisions crossing international borders, the dismemberment of Pakistan, the mass media applauding, the UN once again paralyzed ... and all this preceded Indo - Soviet treaty". He also went on to say that "I was against the intervention of Pakistan army in East Pakistan but this does not detract from the fact that India invaded and dismembered the country".135 Thus, the Shah took a serious view of the use of force by India in changing the status quo in the subcontinent. That was in line with Pakistan's perception of India as an aggressive power intent upon wiping her out.

In the Iranian view a weak and disintegrated Pakistan would seriously threaten Iran's south eastern frontier region. In an exclusive interview, the Shah of Iran reiterated that in case of an attempt aimed at further dismemberment of Pakistan, Iran would "certainly intervene".136 It is in this context that the Shah justified his new plans for massive military build-up and arms acquisition, the bulk of which came from the United States. The joint communique issued after Bhutto's visit to Iran in May 1973 clearly said that Iran and Pakistan would stand together in


defence of Pakistan's territorial integrity.\textsuperscript{137} Iran's interest in underwriting Pakistan's territorial integrity was related to providing for a stable eastern flank.

India was able to convince Iran that as far as Pakistan was concerned, New Delhi's interests coincided with the interest of Tehran. Swaran Singh, the Foreign Minister of India during his visit to Iran in July 1973, made Iran realize that India was not interested in the disintegration of Pakistan. He declared at the banquet hosted by the Iranian Foreign Minister, Abbas Ali Khalatbari, that India had friends who might not be so friendly with Iran. "But we give you full assurance their friendship shall not be used against you".\textsuperscript{138} It was a calculated move by India to hope that a friendly Iran would be less enthusiastic to help Pakistan in any Indo-Pakistani conflict. According to Kuldip Nayar, (a journalist) "once New Delhi had reached an understanding with Tehran, the flow of U.S. arms to Rawalpindi through third countries will stop. In this condition Pakistan would not be encouraged to embark on any new adventure in the belief that Iran would help it in another war against India".\textsuperscript{139}

In the meantime, the Iranian Government also convinced India that its huge arms acquisition from the United State was primari-

\textsuperscript{137} The Hindu (Madras), 23 July 1973.
\textsuperscript{138} Times of India, 22 July 1973.
\textsuperscript{139} Kuldip Nayar, "Between the Lines," Statesman (Delhi), 15 January 1974.
ly related to the defence of the Persian Gulf and protection against the regional rivalries. During his visit to New Delhi in September 1974, the Shah categorically stated that "his government will not supply arms to Rawalpindi. He also said: "there is no need for the countries in the region to remain at loggerheads and they stand to gain by cooperation." 140

Iran's changed perception of India was facilitated by a steady improvement in the subcontinental political situation during 1973-74. The Shah could see that the Indian interest in normalization of relations with Pakistan was genuine. When agreement for the repatriation of Pakistani POW's was worked out in August 1973, the Iranian Foreign Minister expressed his happiness with the agreement in the UN General Assembly on 25 September 1973 and said that "Iran had been completely satisfied with the Indo-Pakistan Agreement". He added that "peace in the subcontinent is an essential ingredient for the security of our region. Therefore, Iran would continue to seek the friendship and cooperation of all concerned parties to preserving peace in the subcontinent. It is fully reflected now in our relations with India reinforced by strong economic and cultural ties". 141

The agreement on POWs was followed by Pakistan's recognition


of Bangladesh in February 1974 and the tripartite agreement among India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in April 1974. Appreciating India’s role in this event, the Iranian Prime Minister declared, during Mrs. Gandhi’s visit to Iran in May 1974, that "Iran welcomed measures taken and supported by Indian Government that led to considerable easing of tension in the Indian subcontinent". 142

The economic factor also combined to impact Iran for seeking a better relationship with India. With the oil price hike, Iran’s oil revenue had risen and its purchasing power also increased. The Shah confidently declared that "in the next ten years Iran will be what Britain is today and that in the next 25 years, Iran will be among the most industrial countries in the world". India appeared an attractive economic partner. According to the Iranian Prime Minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, "the sky is the limit of our cooperation". Iran, he said, is looking forward to a "much more flourishing trade with India and is interested in having assured supplies of a number of commodities". 143 As one of the most developed of the developing countries and due to the complementary nature of the economies of the two, India was well set to supply the inputs for Iran’s

142. For Iran’s comments on Agreement, Tripartite Conference: Documents, Messages and Press Comments on Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan (Government of India, New Delhi, 1975), p.15.

development programmes, with goods (such as iron ore, and building material), technical manpower and equipment.\textsuperscript{144}

Equally, economic factor also impelled India towards seeking a rapprochement with Iran. For India, in view of the fact that Iran supplied one-third of its oil supplies, the oil crisis necessitated a rethinking about its relations with Iran.\textsuperscript{145} It is noteworthy here that the oil crisis shifted the focus of India's Middle Eastern priorities from Egypt to the Persian Gulf region, more so as it was felt in New Delhi that oil would not flow merely for the asking. Close concentrated and sustained contacts with the countries of the region would be necessary.\textsuperscript{146} As a result of this realization, India's relations with Iran acquired added significance.\textsuperscript{147} Iran, it was hoped, would supply an assured quantity of oil on concessional rates and deferred payments basis. Besides, a furiously industrializing Iran could also provide a market for India's consumer goods, technological equipment and skilled manpower.

A new era began not only in Indo-Iran relation but also in

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{145} See \textit{Annual Report 1972-73} (Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, New Delhi, 1974), pp.5-34.

\textsuperscript{146} Swaran Singh's statement in \textit{Lok Sabha Debates} (New Delhi), vol.25, no.43, 24 April 1973, pp.267-89.

the overall bilateral relationship between Iran and Pakistan and Iran and Bangladesh when the domestic scenes both in Iran and Pakistan underwent a radical change in the period between 1977 and 1979. The overthrow of Bhutto from the Pakistan scene in 1977 ushered in a religious-oriented government in Pakistan. The flight of the Shah from Iran in 1979 brought an Islamic government in Iran.

With the proclamation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (April 1979) the new Government started to emphasize on solidarity among all Islamic countries on the basis of Islamic ideology and actively upheld the export of Islamic revolution into other countries. These became cardinal principles of Iranian foreign policy. In this context, to what extent Islam and Islamic brotherhood governed the foreign policy of Iran and its attitude towards the Indian subcontinent? Whereas in Pakistan and Bangladesh Muslims are in majority and the states are Islamic, in India Muslims are in minority and the state is secular. How does Iran react to this situation? First, what is the element of congruence in terms of religious identity between the Islamic states of Iran, Pakistan and Bangladesh? Secondly, how does Iran deal with secular India and what is its attitude towards the Indian Muslims? Does Iran realize this dichotomy and what are its priorities in the changed regional environment especially in the early 1980s and later? Some of the issues during the period were the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, hostage crisis, Iran-Iraq war and
the Kashmir issue. All this constitutes the subject matter of the Chapter that follows.