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"IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION
SINCE THE REVOLUTION IN IRAN,
1979-1984".

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The primary objective of the sub-thesis is to assess the development of relations between Iran and the Soviet Union since the revolution in Iran. In early 1979, the Iranian revolution brought an Islamic government into power. The anti-US slogans of the new government and its complete withdrawal from total dependence on the United States, along with the chaotic situation within Iran, made it vulnerable to outside interference.

On the other hand, in late 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan posed security problems for Iran. The new government responded cautiously and slowly to this development. Internally, the power struggle among the Islamic fundamentalists, the Islamic moderates and the various leftist groups conditioned the relations between Iran and the Soviet Union as they evolved over the period. A 'reasonable working relationship' developed between the two countries despite the ideological differences.

The war between Iran and Iraq provided a test for Soviet policy towards the two Gulf countries. It put immense pressure on Iran's resources. Iran's mission was as much ideological as it was military. The Islamic regime had vowed to export its revolution to other countries, especially in the Gulf. The Iran-Iraq war continued until the time of this writing. Iran is being helped in its war with Iraq indirectly by the Soviet Union, which is also assisting Iraq.

A major break developed in the Iranian-Soviet relations with the banning of the Tudeh party and the expulsion of Soviet diplomats from Iran.
Hence, in the duration from February 1979 until March 1984, various issues have judged the extent of 'mutual interest' of the two countries. For the purpose of explaining these relations, the sub-thesis is divided into five chapters.

The first chapter would provide the background and trace the history of Iran's relations with the Soviet Union (roughly) since the Boshevik revolution until the period of Mohammed Reza Shah.

Chapter two will serve as a background to the 1979 revolution in Iran. It will cover the period of Iran's relations with the Soviet Union from the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.

The third chapter discusses, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and its effect on the Iranian-Soviet relation. The period covered in this chapter is from December 1979 until September 1980.

The fourth chapter analyses Iran's differences with Iraq and the consequent war between the two countries. Iran's relations with Soviet Union since the start of the war until March 1983 when the Tudeh was banned and from then on an assessment is made of the pattern of their relations until March 1984.

The final chapter shall form the conclusion of the sub-thesis, providing a brief overview of the Iranian-Soviet relations and an analysis of the trend of their relationship.

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TASNEEM MEENAI
CHAPTER I

The Iranian-Soviet relations have developed on the basis of cultural, political, military and economic interaction. The commercial relations between the two countries commenced during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. These relations were conducted on an equal basis unregulated by any rule or convention.

The emergence of Peter the Great (1682 - 1725) led to Russian military expansion into the northern areas of the Persian empire. Nadir Shah conducted an aggressive Persian policy towards Russia. By the Treaty of Resht in 1732 and the Treaty of Ganjeh in 1735 Persia appeared to have regained some prestige. But under Katherine (1762-96) and Nicholas I (1825-55) Russia once again emerged powerful. In 1795 and 1801 Persia met with defeat by Russia after which many treaties were signed between the two countries. On these treaties, the Treaty of Gulistan (1813) and the Treaty of Turkmanchay (1828) established a special status and an area of jurisdiction for Russia in Iranian affairs. An important aspect of Iranian-Soviet relations which set the pace for Soviet dominance in Iran were the politico-economic relations between the two countries. In 1888, the Transcaspian railway line was constructed. A Russian naval base was established at Ashurda, along with the setting up of a Persian Cossack Brigade with Russian assistance. Russia further extended its economic dominance over Iran through the Treaty of Erzurum in 1903.

The ideological factor was introduced into the Iranian-Soviet relations with the setting up of a Republic in the Soviet Union after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. The new government faced the problem of pursuing a policy of either preserving its ideological interests or the state interest. The post-revolutionary Soviet Government supported the new regime of Reza Shah and declared Iran to be a semi-bourgeois state. Ideology, therefore, was not the dominant factor in Iran-Soviet relations. Iran's relations with the Soviet Union progressed smoothly during Reza Khan's period on the basis of 1921 Treaty of Friendship and the 1927 Treaty of Neutrality as well as the economic agreements of 1935.

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Iran's strategic location has had deep political consequences. It has attracted foreign powers like the Soviet Union and Great Britain in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century and the United States since the mid-twentieth century. The Soviet Union had a history of keen interest in the region south of its border. Since the middle of the eighteenth century Anglo-Soviet rivalry dominated the politics of Persia. Iran being strategically located between Europe and Asia also came within the geographical perimeters of Russian security. Soviet interest in Iran clashed with British colonial expansion in the region of the subcontinent as Iran fell within the British imperial lines of communication. Iran maintained its identity even though the foreign powers constantly interfered in its domestic affairs and undermined its sovereignty.

Direct Soviet involvement in Iran dates from the early nineteenth century when in 1801 the Czarist troops annexed Georgia and a part of Azerbaijan. In 1813, by the treaty of Gulistan, the Czar established his dominance in the region of the Caucasus and even gained economic advantages in Iran. By 1828, Iran, after further mismanagement of its affairs by the Qajar kings had to yield even more territory and economic concessions to the Russians. The 1828 Treaty of Turkmanchay established the present boundary line between Iran and the Soviet Union.

The Anglo-Soviet struggle for influence in Iran continued over the period. In 1907 the Anglo-Russian convention was signed in which the two powers called for the division of Iran into spheres of influence. Russia acquired the northern part whereas Britain extended its influence beyond the subcontinent all the way to the southern part of Iran. A neutral zone lay in the middle.

During World War I these two rivals came together against a common enemy, Germany. They occupied Iran. In the struggle that started in Iran, between the Turks and Russians in the north-west of Iran, and the Qashqai
and Bakhtiari revolt against the British in the south, Britain emerged stronger in contrast to a weakened Soviet position. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia needed to consolidate its position, hence the new leaders sought to have a reasonable external environment. In 1919 the British had attempted to bring Iran under its total dominance by offering an Anglo-Persian treaty. The Iranian Majlis did not ratify the treaty. At that time the Soviet-supported rebellion in Azerbaijan forced the British to retreat and the British weakness became apparent. The Bolsheviks, therefore, did not want to provide any pretext for further British expansion in Iran.

On February 26, 1921, Russia signed a Treaty of Friendship with Iran which was formally ratified by the Majlis in December that year. 'It declared all Czarist claims on Iran based on the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 and other accords to be null and void'.

The following articles (V and VI) were especially important for defining Soviet-Iranian relations in 1941 and in the post-World War II period:

Under Article V the two parties undertook to prohibit the formation or presence within their respective territories of any organisation or groups of persons whose object is to engage in acts of hostility against Persia or Russia or against the allies of Russia. Not to allow the import or to convey in transit across their countries material which can be used against the other party.

Article VI stipulated that if a third party should desire to use Persian territory against Russia, and if the Persian government should not be able to put a stop to such a menace after having been once called to do so by Russia, Russia shall have the right to defend itself. It may advance its troops into the Persian territory for this purpose, but undertakes to withdraw her troops from the Persian territory as soon as the danger has been removed.
Russia also withdrew its support from the puppet Soviet Republic of Gilan. To lay the foundations for its future influence, Russia sponsored the establishment of a pro-Moscow Iranian Communist group, which later led to the development of the Iranian Communist party, called Tudeh ('masses').

The coup in 1925 led by Reza Shah liquidated the rule of the Qajar dynasty. Reza Shah was crowned as the Shah of Iran in 1926. Normalization of relations with the Soviet Union took place one year later when in 1927, Reza Shah signed a treaty of guarantee and neutrality with Russia. His determination to bring about a balance in the Soviet and British influence in Iran made him diversify his sources of expertise and technical assistance. He looked for such assistance from France, Germany, the United States, Austria and China.

Reza Shah also strove to gain more control of Iran's oil revenues. He demanded more concessions from the British. In the struggle that ensued, Britain, through its show of strength, was able to retain its monopoly of the Iranian oil industry. This showdown with Britain led to improved relations with the Soviet Union.

During the Second World War the Soviet Union was invaded by Germany. Under the Allied agreement Britain came to the rescue by providing arms to the Soviet Union through Iran. Though Reza Shah had declared neutrality in the war, he was overruled by the two powers. Subsequently, Britain and the Soviet Union occupied Iran and placed its sovereignty provisionally under their joint protection. Iran, therefore, could not conduct its domestic and foreign policy and Reza Shah was forced to abdicate in favour of his son Mohammed Reza Shah.

A Tripartite Treaty of alliance was signed on January 29, 1942 whereby Russia and Britain agreed to withdraw the allied forces from Iran within six months of the close of the war. When the war was over both Britain and the Soviet Union sought to minimize each other's influence in Iran. Stalin began the 'Sovietization' of Iran by strengthening Soviet
forces in the occupied provinces. The Soviet Union supported the separatist revolts in Iran and undertook measures to bring about socio-economic changes in the northern provinces of Iran which were under their control. The Soviet Union also strengthened the Tudeh which had been banned by Reza Shah in 1937. The Tudeh party established the Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan under Jafar Pishvar and the Kurdish Democratic party proclaimed Kurdish autonomy in Mahabad. Needless to say that the Soviet Union supported these newly autonomous states. Also during this period, the Soviet Union pressed Iran for oil concession in order to set up a joint Iranian-Soviet oil company on the pattern of the Iranian concessions conceded to Britain.

The reviving of Tudeh made the British encourage anti-communist parties like the Zardeye Milli (National Will). The formation of pro-Western political parties fuelled the traditional Anglo-Soviet rivalry.

In the meantime, the changing international context witnessed the declining British influence. America came to replace Britain and included Iran in its 'New Deal' policy to oppose the Soviet Union.

During the oil crises of 1944 the Soviet Union demanded oil concessions from Iran in competition with the United States and Britain. Due to the presence in the Majlis of strong nationalists like Mohammed Mossadegh, a bill was passed postponing any oil concessions until the end of the war. This made the Iranian government an object of criticism from the Soviet Union and the Tudeh party. Relations between the two countries further cooled down when the Soviet Union refused to withdraw its army from the Iranian soil. This was against the Tripartite treaty obligations and the matter was referred to the United Nations Security Council. Finally in May 1946, as a result of the understanding reached with Prime Minister Qavam and the Soviet government, Soviet troops evacuated Iran.

Trade relations between Iran and the Soviet Union during this period were negligible and the Tudeh was outlawed in 1949 when an attempt was made on the Shah's life.
The Iranian Majlis, led by Mossadeq, also took a very independent posture when it decided to stop all preferential treatment to any of the foreign countries. As a result of Soviet hostility and Mossadeq's increasing authority, the Shah turned toward the United States for support.\(^6\)

Hence, the vain attempts of the disintegrative movement of ethnic minorities, the failure of a larger communist movement to share in power, and the successful use of Iranian parliamentary and constitutional procedures to check Soviet goals combined to impose a cautious and rather conservative attitude on the USSR.\(^7\)

Mohd. Reza Shah had driven Iran into an alliance with America in order to balance the threat from a proximate super power. For a decade (1953-62) he linked the security of Iran with that of the Western world by joining the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and signed a bilateral mutual security pact with the United States in March 1959. Iran's entry into the pact ended its officially proclaimed policy of neutrality and even handedness between East and West, and it now became integrated into the Western camp.\(^8\) This alliance became an important instrument and issue in Iran's relations with the Soviet Union. But the Shah did not allow relations with the Soviet Union to get to a point of no return. He firmly withstood pressure from the Soviet Union against Iran's Western alliance, but at the same time kept the option open for good relations with it.

In 1953, after Stalin's death, the Soviet government made attempts to normalise relations with Iran. The Soviet Union initiated negotiations on the unsettled boundary problems as well as the financial claims that had arisen due to World War II. As a result, protocols were signed in March 1954 and a treaty regarding Iranian-Soviet border issue was signed in May 1957.\(^9\)

The Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence found a favourable response from Iran. The Shah and Shahbanoo paid a state visit to the Soviet Union in 1956 and a delegation of Iranian Majlis also visited the USSR in the same year.\(^10\)
In the early 1960s, due to changed international environment, there occurred a dramatic change in Iranian Soviet relations. The emergence of the Sino-Soviet dispute engaged the Soviet Union at other points of its Asian border. In the background of a thaw in the cold war and the rapid development of technology, the Soviet Union sought to counter the Chinese threat by improving relations with its southern neighbour.

The Shah, on the other hand, wanted to make the most of the opportunity that had arisen due to the détente in super power relations. He was motivated into better ties with Moscow with the change in leadership in the United States. The new Kennedy administration expected the Shah to liberalise his government and bring about the necessary socio-economic changes. Also the termination of defense support underscored their differences in perspective. Lest Iran be left on its own by an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Shah acted to normalise relations with Russia.

Given the circumstances, the Soviet Union found the opportunity to demonstrate to Iran the advantages of having a close economic and political relationship with a resourceful neighbour. This was best illustrated by the growth in trade between the two countries which increased tenfold during the period 1966 - 1973.

The period from 1962 to 1968 saw the Iranian-Soviet relations progress smoothly. The Soviet Union was careful to maintain good relations with Iran. The two countries entered into an economic agreement for the construction of two dams and one hydroelectric power station on the Aras River in 1963. The Shah visited Moscow from June 21 to July 3, 1965. Two major economic and military agreements were signed. The first was concluded in January 1966. Iran was to supply the Soviet Union with more than $600 million worth of natural gas beginning in 1970, in return, the U.S.S.R. undertook to build Iran's first large steel mill complex in Isfahan, construct a gas pipeline from northern Iran to the Caucasus, and establish a machine tool plant in Shiraz. Under the second agreement,
initiated in February 1967, the Soviets agreed to supply Tehran with some $110 million worth of armoured troop carriers, trucks, and anti-aircraft guns in return for natural gas from Iran.\(^4\)

In 1962, the Shah of Iran had launched a programme of socio-economic reforms called the 'white Revolution'. The 26th January, 1963 referendum on the reforms proposed by the Iranian government received favourable Soviet comments, stressing that a majority of the Iranians favoured the Shahs' proposals. 'The reactionary forces - the large landholders, supported by the reactionary clergy - violently opposed the land reforms.' Soviet commentators saw the reform as an advance from feudalism to capitalism, a strengthening of the proletarian element in rural society, an acceleration of polarization of the classes, and an undermining of the political influence of the big landlords.\(^5\)

The Soviet Union encouraged the 'White Revolution' at the expense of their support to the communists in Iran. In the process, the Shah found a market for Iran's gas outside the capitalist world and another source of economic and technological aid in accelerating the 'White Revolutions' programme of heavy industrialisation.\(^6\) During the period 1962-68 pragmatism dictated Iranian-Soviet relations. But this phase of co-operation and good neighbourliness did not last.

In the late 1960s, political developments in the region influenced the Iranian-Soviet relations. In a coup in 1968, the Baath party assumed power in Iraq. The new Baathist regime in Iraq faced insurrection at home from the Kurdish minority seeking greater autonomy. The Kurds were getting support from Iran. Furthermore, Iran and Iraq had a dispute over the Shatt-al-Arab which Iraq claimed to be an integral part of its territory. This led Teheran on April 16, 1969, to declare the 1937 treaty, which had been foisted on Iran by a British-controlled Iraq, null and void. Iran contended that Iraq did not adhere to the treaty as it had failed to conclude a convention for maintaining the navigability of the estuary for thirty two years.\(^7\) Teheran was
increasingly becoming more assertive in regional politics and the Iranian quest for dominance clashed with Iraq's ambitious in the Persian Gulf region.

Iraq and Soviet Union signed a fifteen year treaty of friendship and Co-operation on 9th April, 1972. By the treaty both the countries undertook to strengthen the defence capabilities of each other. The Soviet Union supplied arms to Iraq in 1972, 1973 and increasingly in 1974. It also provided surface-to-air missiles to defend Iraqi troops against Iranian air raids. As the 1972 treaty institutionalized Soviet Iraqi cooperation, the conflict between Iran and Iraq became an important factor in Soviet-Iran relations.

Shah's policy in the region of the Persian Gulf was greatly influenced by the fear from Arab radicalism. He did not believe that Soviet troops would enter Iran directly and this made him station fewer forces on the Soviet border. However, he was of the opinion that the Soviets were acting against him indirectly, attempting to encircle him by using the radical forces in the region as proxies. He saw a danger to himself in Egypt's heavy involvement, until mid 1967, in the civil war in Yemen, and in the Soviet's strengthening of Iraq and Afghanistan. Also the revolt in the Dhofar province of Oman was, in his view, an attempt to start overthrowing regimes in the west of the Gulf and then turn against him. He was afraid that the British withdrawal from Aden and the planned withdrawal from Eastern Arabia would leave a vacuum, with radical Arab forces backed by Soviet aid trying to fill it. This made him decide to strengthen Iran, making it a strong regional power able to defend itself against any combination of local forces.

To this end, Iran set about establishing relations with a major power in the Asian region, i.e. China. The 1969 Brezhnev proposal for creating an Asian collective security system, which despite Soviet denials, was clearly aimed at isolating China in Asia, was turned down
by the Shah. In return, the Chinese withdrew aid to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and the Dhofari rebels in Oman. Iran established good relations with China in 1971. Normalization of relations between China and Iran took place due to fear from the Soviet Union as well as the detente between the US and USSR.  

From 1974 onwards Iran's relations with the Soviet Union entered a phase of hostility. The Shah, confident of his position, after the success of the white Revolution and the increasing oil wealth that Iran came to acquire after the 1973 quadrupling of oil prices, had significantly enlarged his military programmes and this clashed with the Soviet expectations of a docile and compliant neighbour.  

The Soviet Union added to the tense relations by arming Iraq which was fast becoming a threat to Iran's potential hegemonial role in the Persian Gulf region. During the late 1970s the Soviets were also heavily involved in Afghanistan. Iran's policies in the Persian Gulf along with its agreement with the US permitting the establishment of American reconnaissance stations near the Soviet border further antagonized the Soviets.  

Moreover, the Soviet Union considered Iran's extensive arms deals with the US and other Western nations as exceeding the legitimate defence requirements of Iran. It even viewed this massive acquiring of arms by Iran as a source of instability in the region. The Soviets appeared cautious and restrained, yet warned Iran about "the consequences of a continued arms building in 1973, 1974 and 1976".  

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and China in August 1971 created another area of Iranian-Soviet discord. China's anti-Sovietism conditioned Iranian-Soviet relations till 1973. The Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng Fei, on a visit to Teheran in June 1973 endorsed the massive Iranian arms buildup in order to negate the Soviet role in the region. During his visit to Teheran in 1973, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Huang Hua, suggested that the third world countries should unite with Western nations against the
Soviet Union which was the common enemy. In August 1978, both Iran and China, expressed their concern over the communist coup in Afghanistan and the situation in the PDHY when the Chinese communist Party Chairman Hua-Kuo Feng visited Iran. The Soviet Union criticised these Chinese visits to Iran and considered them as part of increasing Chinese influence in the Persian Gulf region to the detriment of Soviet Union.

At the regional level, Iran sought to play the role of a policeman. On 30 November, 1971, in order to control the Gulf entrances and secure free navigation in the Gulf, Iran occupied the two Tumb and the Abu Musa islands located strategically close to the narrow entrance to the strait of Hormuz. Iran patrolled the strait of Hormuz and between 1972 and 1975 helped Oman suppress the Dhofari rebels who operated with Soviet supplies from sanctuary in the PDHY.

Moreover, the Shah's proposal of a common market for the Indian Ocean littoral states was a direct counter to Brezhnev's proposal to develop an Asian collective security system. The Shah also sought to undermine Soviet influence in the region by providing economic assistance to India and Afghanistan. Iran also supported President Sadat in the Middle East and Somalia in the Horn of Africa to attain the same objective.

At the international level, the American defeat in Vietnam had prompted the enunciation of the Nixon Doctrine of August 1969. The doctrine stated that the "US would not intervene directly on behalf of friendly states but would provide them with the wherewithal to defend their own (and presumably US) national interests". Hence the Shah, already aspiring to dominate the Persian Gulf, assumed the responsibility of protecting Iranian and American interests there.

The political differences that emerged between Iran and the Soviet Union did not hinder the development of economic cooperation between them. Bilateral trade in 1977 exceeded $1 billion and was growing rapidly so that by the end of the year, Iran was USSR's largest non-military trading partner in the third world.
Soviet Union, towards the end of 1978, has ranked first in Iranian exports (excluding oil). 40

These trade relations proved to be a stabilizing influence on their relations. Despite the growing political differences, the Soviet Union maintained a certain level of support to the Shah's regime, obviously dictated by national interest.

Iran's relations with the Soviet Union during the Shah's period can be effectively summarized in Rubinstein's words:

"The Soviet Union and Iran dealt with each other on the basis of mutual advantage. Despite different systems and antithetical ideologies they developed valued economic relations, kept their border quiet, and handled their regional rivalry pragmatically and prudently. Each derived considerable benefit from the normalized relations". 41

The revolution in Iran, in early 1979, had caught many unawares and the Soviet Union was no exception. During the civil strife at the end of the Shah's rule, the Soviet Union did not criticize his regime probably anticipating the Shah's capacity to consolidate his power. Yet once it was clear that the Shah was losing ground and that Ayatollah Rouhalla Khomeini was to lead Iran, the Soviets switched their support to him. This was manifested in the total support given to the Islamic revolution in its final phase by the pro-Moscow Tudeh party.

The Soviet attitude clearly exhibited that irrespective of the nature of its leadership, a stable and non-aligned Iran is absolutely vital to Soviet security.

2. Ibid pp. 2/3


6. Saikal, ibid., p.17

7. Ibid.


10. Rubinstein, ibid., p.61.

11. Saikal, ibid., pp. 21-22

12. Ibid., p.23.

13. Ibid., pp.25-26


Contd. p/2

20. Ibid., p. 382.


22. Chubin and Zabin, ibid., pp. 63-64.

23. Rubinstein, ibid., p. 66.


25. Yodfat, ibid., p. 29.


27. Ramazani, ibid., p. 417.


29. Yodfat, ibid., p. 31.


31. Yodfat, ibid., p. 35.


33. Ibid., p.4.

34. Rubinstein, ibid., p.92.

Contd. p/3
35. Abidi, ibid., pp. 163-164.
36. Yodfat, ibid., p. 36.
37. Rubinstein, ibid., p. 75.
38. ibid.
39. Chubin, ibid., p. 22.
40. Yodfat, ibid., p. 40.
41. Rubinstein, ibid., p. 95.
CHAPTER - II

REVOLUTIONARY IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION - FEBRUARY 1979 to DECEMBER 1979

The first chapter served as a background to the period under study. It traced the development of Iranian-Soviet relations since the end of the Second World War. An assessment of Iranian-Soviet relations since the overthrow of the Shah would not be complete without first evaluating the course of his downfall.

The Iranian revolution, which came as a surprise to most observers of the country's politics, was the culmination of a process which had been building up for about twenty five years. The Iranian society was beset with problems of social, economic and political development. The policies of the Shah did little to improve the socio-economic conditions of most Iranians. Though the 'White Revolution' brought about some changes in the society, it met with opposition from the religious leaders. In the early 1960s, Ayatollah Khomeini led the opposition against the Shah's socio-economic programme, specially the land reform policies. The communists also joined the opposition and called for the adoption of a socialistic path of development. The oil wealth was not utilised to generate employment in all sectors of the Iranian economy. Instead, much of it was used to buy the most sophisticated military hardware. Also, the heavy investment in military-ware did not provide much employment to the Iranians as American personnel were brought in to maintain these sophisticated arms.

Over and above this the Shah presided over a highly centralized political system. There was, for a time, some semblance of a two party system in the country but the two parties Iran-e-Novin and

(contd.../2)
Mardom, were merged into one in early 1975. The new party was called National Resurgence Party and the Shah banned all other parties. The Shah maintained absolute control of the political realm by 'cultivating a politics of distrust' through his extremely brutal security system, the SAVAK.

Towards the late 1970s, the Shah was influenced into taking measures to liberalize his governance. President Carter, in pursuing his human rights campaign, brought pressure on the Shah. Domestically, too, there were many demands for political reforms. At the same time, the effects of his Western oriented economic reforms and planning, under the so-called White Revolution, were very apparent. The implementation of the land reforms and other agrarian reforms led to social and economic displacements. The agrarian and educational reforms attacked the material base of the clergy and this gave them a concrete reason to oppose the Shah. The rising inflation and other social and economic hardships created tremendous dissatisfaction among the Iranian masses. This feeling of insecurity was gradually building up and found an outlet when the Shah undertook the 'liberalization measures'.

**THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION:**

The protest movement against the Shah started in early 1978 when a member of demonstrations were held in major Iranian cities. Active opposition to the Shah was propagated by the urban middle class and the students. By mid-January, the religious leaders mobilised the urban poor and from February onwards a number of street demonstration were held. In order to contain

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the rising opposition, the Shah had to impose martial law by September 1978. After facing three months of intense agitation, when the Iranian economy was almost brought to a standstill through the strikes in the oil industry and other sectors, the Shah was persuaded to leave his country by the Carter administration. The Shah left Iran on 16 January 1979, and on 10-11 February a mass uprising put Khomeini's followers in power.1

Apart from it being a political and social revolt, the Iranian revolution had a distinct ideological flavour, in that it was extremely nationalistic, protesting against the 'imposition of Western advisers and culture upon Iran'.2

Khomeini's ascendancy in the Iranian political set up signified the prevalence of traditional, conservative elements that had succeeded in giving direction to the revolution. The clergy was responsible in organizing political opposition and mobilizing the masses. Khomeini led all sections of the population into a United Front which included the middle bourgeoisie, the urban petty bourgeoisie, artisans and small scale tradesmen as well as the industrial proletariat, students and peasants.3 The intelligentsia was influenced by secularism and foreign philosophies like Communists, Socialists, nationalists and the Liberal democrats.4 The working classes under the influence of such leftist groups like Mujahideen-e-Khalq and Fedayeen-e-Khalq and the Tudeh were limited in strength as there was a ban on their activities during the Shah's period. Yet these parties were successful in organizing the workers of the Ahwaz oilfields and the Abadan refinery. All shades of political opposition found

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expression and articulation in Khomeini's anti-Shah and anti-US pronouncements.

The Soviet Union, which had cultivated quite a stable economic relationship with the Shah over the previous fifteen years, was initially reluctant to support the opposition movement, which dominated as it was by the Ulama, was considered by the Soviets to be ideologically incompatible. But Khomeini's pronounced anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism encouraged Moscow to lend vocal support to the protest movement. The pro-Moscow Tudeh gave a call for the formation of a United Front to overthrow the monarchy and joined the anti-Shah movement in late 1978. The Tudeh party acknowledged Khomeini's leadership as it was mainly anti-imperialistic.

Moscow openly supported the Iranian opposition to the Shah in late 1978. To appease the opposition, the Shah had removed some of his unpopular officials and released many political prisoners. He also assured elections and promised a Western style democracy for Iran. The Soviet Union disliked the proposition for a Western type of democracy as it implied more Western and American influence in Iran. It condemned the Shah for his pro-imperialist policies and charged the US of interference in Iran's internal matters. Throughout the crisis, the Shah waited for signals from America and the Soviet Union took a serious view of this. In a statement in Pravda on November 19, 1978, the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev warned the US that "any (intervention), particularly military, interference in the affairs of Iran, a state directly bordering on the Soviet Union, would be regarded by the Soviet Union as affecting its security interests".

Moscow also warned the US against suppressing the opposition through military action. Referring to these statements later on, the Soviet Union tried to take credit of having protected the Iranian revolution.
After assuming power, the Islamic regime was also tolerant of the Marxist elements for reasons of political expediency, as it had to hold the various sections together in its bid to consolidate itself. Although making clear the regime's opposition to Marxism, Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, then Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Revolutionary Affairs, was quoted as saying, "We are Moslems and we have a monotheistic view of the world. In such a movement there is no room for non-Islamic or anti-Islamic creeds. Marxism, based on dialectical materialism, is fundamentally opposed to the Islamic vision, especially in economic, political and social fields. Any effort to reconcile these two doctrines is doomed to failure. However, in the Islamic State Marxists will have the right to express their opinion."

This statement was consistent with Khomeini's earlier declaration, before assuming power that "the Marxists will be free (in the Islamic society of Iran) to express their opinion, for we are convinced that Islam has all the answers our people need ... we have never denied them their freedom or infringed upon it. Everyone is free to express his opinion, but not to conspire."

Hence the Tudeh party, along with other leftist groups, was allowed to function in the post revolutionary atmosphere.

Following the declaration of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 1st April, 1979, one of the first governments to express immediate recognition was that of the Soviet Union.

President Brezhnev congratulated Ayatollah Khomeini on the proclamation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and confirmed that the policy of the USSR
vis-a-vis Iran is one of sincere friendship and good neighbourliness. Khomeini's first meeting with a foreign envoy was with Soviet ambassador Vladimir M. Vinogradov on 25th February, 1979.

KHOMEINI'S FOREIGN POLICY STANCE:

The change of government in Iran introduced an element of uncertainty in the domestic politics and a lack of a distinct foreign policy. For the first time, since the Second World War, the situation in Iran provided the Soviet Union with an opportunity to exercise its influence. The Soviet expectations of good-neighbourly relations were fulfilled to the extent that Khomeini's non-aligned, extremely nationalistic policies were to their advantage.

The new revolutionary government under Khomeini adopted a progressive foreign policy under the dictum 'Neither East, Nor West'. Iran became a member of the non-aligned movement and opposed colonialism and discrimination. It advocated independence, peaceful coexistence and cooperation with the third world countries.

In order to gain support and consolidate his authority, Khomeini continued with his anti-US policies. His extreme anti-Westernism demonstrated to his supporters the conviction that he wanted Iran to be truly independent. The Iranian government drastically altered the 'polito-strategic orientation' of the Shah's policies. This process of 'de-Westernization' was considered to be extremely beneficial by the Soviet Union.

Iran expelled multinational cooperations and undertook measures for large scale nationalization and the cancellation of major contracts involving foreign companies. This included the cancellation of the construction of a pipeline which was to supply the Soviet Union and other European countries.

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with natural gas. The U.S. was asked to close its monitoring posts on the Soviet-Iranian border and Iran disallowed any further electronic surveillance by the U.S.A. According to the Draft constitution which was officially published on June 18, 1979, and which clearly voiced the Ayatollah's non-aligned foreign policy, no foreign military bases were to be allowed in Iran under any circumstances. 'The employment of foreign experts and consultants would require parliamentary approval'.

Iran withdrew from CENTO, thereby breaking the American sponsored security system in the region. And 'on March 6, 1979, it was announced that a proposed naval base under construction at Shah Bahar (on the Gulf of Oman) would be converted into a fishing harbour as Iran would no longer play the role of policeman on the Persian Gulf.'

Iran came closer to those Arab nations which were anti-American. It broke off all relations with Israel and recognized the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), handing over to it the Israeli embassy. Iran severed diplomatic connection with Egypt and joined the Arab nations in opposing the American sponsored Camp David settlement between Egypt and Israel.

Khomeini, in his endeavour to make Iran a non-aligned country, tried to bring Iran out of its total dependence on the West, especially America. On the other hand, he established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and allowed the Tudeh to function within limits.

With this background, in the next few pages, an attempt will be made to trace the development of revolutionary Iran's political, economic and military relations with the Soviet Union in the first year of the revolution, until the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979.
a - Political relations

The ideological differences between Iran and the Soviet Union that came to exist once it became clear that Iran was to be an Islamic Republic did not hinder the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Soviet policy during this period was to gain as much influence as possible in Iran at the cost of the decline of US position in the country. From the beginning it encouraged Iranian hostility to the US when it supported the revolution in Iran mainly because it was anti-imperialist, i.e. basically anti-American. Throughout the year 1979 the Soviet Union pursued this policy. The taking of US hostages by Iranian students on 4 November, 1979 provided the Soviets with an opportunity to fuel further the anti-American sentiments in Iran.

The hostage crisis had dealt a further blow to the American position in Iran after the Shah's over-throw. The Carter administration was looking into the possibilities of having a 'rapid deployment force' in readiness for any emergency in the Gulf region. The Soviet Union considered such moves a threat to its security and declared that it would not tolerate US military intervention in Iran.14

The hostage crisis also provided the Soviets with the opportunity to gain an economic foothold in Iran, apart from the political gains that accrued to them. The US Government, in order to solve the hostage issue tried to put pressure on Iran, by asking the UN Security Council to impose economic sanctions, failing which it went ahead on its own. The US Government halted the supply of military spare parts to Iran. 'On Nov. 12, 1979, President Carter ordered an end to US oil imports from Iran'.15

The Soviet Union tried to make the most of this crisis by offering Iran to help ease the pressures of US economic embargo by expanding Soviet-Iranian trade relations. It also discouraged Iranian economic ties and cooperation with the states in the Persian Gulf which were friendly to the US.
At the same time the Soviet Union sought to enhance its influence by encouraging the increase in political, economic and military ties between Iran and the socialist countries.\(^{16}\)

At the domestic level, the Soviet Union tried to weaken the position of such personalities in Iranian politics that were in favour of normalising relations with the US. It also strove to elicit the regime's tolerance towards Tudeh and encouraged such radical domestic economic policies as the rationalisation of foreign trade, greater measures of land reform, and an increased governmental participation in the Iranian economy.\(^{17}\)

The geographical location of Iran adjacent to Soviet Union and its sharing of 1,500 kms. of common boundary in the north has resulted in an ethnic admixture of population along the border areas. Islam is the major religion adhered to by the Azerbaijanis, Kurds and Turkomans in the frontier regions. With this result, the Islamic revolution in Iran has a potential for influence across the border. The Soviet Union, therefore, strove to maintain good state-to-state relations with Iran. It hoped, thereby, that Iran would restrain its vocal propaganda aimed at the Soviet Muslim minorities.

During the first year of the revolution, the Soviet Union, therefore, publicly acknowledged the revolution in Iran as being 'objectively progressive' and sought to minimise the Islamic aspect by underplaying the religious content of the movement. The revolution was considered the first step towards total revolution. Whenever Iranian religious leaders expressed concern over the fate of Muslims in Soviet Union, the Soviet media usually retaliated by giving an account of the religious freedom the Soviet Muslims enjoyed. "They tried to prove that no contradiction existed between communism and Islam and that Iran's existence as a Muslim state need not influence its relations with the Soviet Union."\(^{18}\)
Among other domestic issues, the Kurdish demand for autonomy within the Iranian state also became a factor influencing Iranian-Soviet relations. The Soviet Union had always expressed support for Kurdish autonomy even prior to the Islamic revolution after the change of regime in Iran, the Soviet Union continued its policy of supporting minorities, especially the Kurds. The Soviet support for Kurdish demands lessened towards the end of November, 1979 probably due to Soviet reassessment of Iranian domestic situation as well as the taking of American hostages on 4th November, 1979. The Soviets wanted to demonstrate total support to the Iranians and to strengthen their anti-American sentiment.19

On the other head, the Islamic regime which had banned the activities of the Tudeh and other leftist parties in August, 1979, lifted the ban on Tudeh on 2 October, 1979 thereby gaining its support for the regime's activities.

b - Economic relations

In the economic field, as already mentioned the Soviet Union got the opportunity to increase trade relations with Iran due to the U.S. economic embargo. Even before the hostage crisis, Soviet efforts were directed at expanding economic ties between Iran and the socialist bloc. It had also offered economic aid to Iran.

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Prior to the revolution the Soviet bloc countries received only 0.5% of Iranian exports and provided only 3.7% of Iran's imports. Iranian exports to Soviet Union since the revolution have remained at their pre-revolutionary level. However, Iranian imports from Soviet bloc countries increased to 8.8% of Iran's total imports in the period following the US economic embargo. Iran's dependence on the Soviet Union as a transit route for importing goods from other countries also increased.21

On the other hand, the gas supply agreement made by the Shah to the Soviet Union was considered exploitative by the new regime. This feeling created tension between the two countries and eventually in March 1980, the gas supply to the Soviet Union was halted. Also in July 1979, the Iranian government cancelled the construction of the second Iran Natural Gas Trunkline (IGAT-2) which was expected to open in 1981 and was to deliver larger quantities of gas to the Soviet Union.22

This trend of economic relations in the first year of rule by the revolutionary government in Iran clearly shows the mutual gained from improved economic ties given the domestic situation in Iran and the international situation after the taking of American hostages.

The regime in Iran tolerated the Tudeh's functioning as it needed every support when it was diplomatically isolated at the international level. It welcomed Soviet economic support during the period but made sure that the economic ties so formed did not lead to greater Soviet influence in Iran's domestic politics.

c. Military Relations

There were no substantial military relations between Iran and the Soviet Union during this period but the Soviet Union gained an immense military ad-
vantage in an indirect manner. The Iranian decision to withdraw from CENTO was regarded as of great strategic importance by the Soviet Union as it brought about a discontinuity in the encirclement of its southern border by the US and its allies. Also the Iranian decision to discontinue close military cooperation that existed between Iran and the US during the Shah's period was definitely to Soviet advantage.

'General Qarani, then Armed Forces Chief of Staff, said on February 21, 1979, that the US would be asked to close its monitoring posts on the Soviet-Iranian border and that Iran would not allow further electronic surveillance by the USA. He added, however, that some continued military cooperation remained possible, including the purchase of spare parts of US-made weapons and completion of the training of Iranian soldiers in the USA. On March 3, 1979, the General said that all services rendered by US military personnel to the Iranian forces had been terminated.23

The diplomatic immunity granted to US military advisers since October 1977 was abrogated on May 23, 1979. On August 9, 1979, the Iranian government 'officially rescinded its armaments purchase contracts with the USA (except for the supply of spare parts and specified equipment). Iran also boycotted weapons from other Western countries when it cancelled orders, on April 5, 1979, for supply of British Shir-Chieftain tanks, West German submarines, frigates and equipment for the port of Bushire and naval vessels from France.24

The Soviet Union, on its part, encouraged Iranian dislike for the military by accusing it of past collusion with the Shah and the US.25

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The US hostage issue further complicated Iranian-Soviet and Iranian-American military relations. In its bid to influence Iran, Washington disclosed on November 8, 1979, 'that the U.S. Government had ordered a halt to the shipment of $300,000,000 worth of military spare parts (already paid for) to Iran until the problem of the hostages was resolved'. This was to affect Iran later in its war with Iraq.

The Iranian Government, to prevent any military action from either super power, announced on November 5, 1979, a day after the taking of US hostages, 'that it had abrogated (i) a 1959 defence agreement between Iran and the US and (ii) Articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 treaty between Iran and the Soviet Union, under which the latter was authorized to send troops into Iran in the event of anti-Soviet forces using Iranian territory in an attempt to overthrow the Soviet regime'. The Soviet Union had insisted on the validity of the Soviet-Iranian treaty of February 26, 1921, despite repeated repudiations by the Shah as well as Khomeini - It reaffirmed the treaty on February 27, 1979, two days after Khomeini met the Soviet ambassador in Iran. But when Teheran abrogated the 'offensive articles' of the treaty on November 5, 1979, Moscow chose to ignore the incident and increased its verbal support for the Iranians in their dispute with the US.

There were no arms agreements between Iran and Moscow despite Iranian rejection of US military assistance. This may have been due to the regime's preoccupation with the domestic strife and as a reaction towards lessening the army's preponderance that existed prior to the revolution.

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The provision in the Draft-Constitution of no military bases 'under any circumstances' excluded any possibility of Soviet or American military influence. As the employment of foreign experts and consultants required parliamentary approval, such moves were to be subjected to the decisions of the IRP dominated Majlis.

The November 4 hostage crisis had provided the Soviet Union with an opportunity to maintain and increase its influence in Iran. This phase was shortlived as the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in late December, 1979, made the regime in Iran to doubt seriously Soviet intentions in the region. The Iranian reaction to Soviet activities in Afghanistan will be discussed in the next chapter.

It can be concluded that the first year of the revolutionary government in Iran did bring substantial gains to the Soviet Union, politically, economically and militarily, when compared with the Shah's period. These opportunities were not provided intentionally but came about as a by-product of the regime's extreme anti-westernism. The Soviet Union tried its best to maintain and consolidate its influence in Iran throughout 1979, but was constrained by the limits set by the Islamic regime. Moreover, its military involvement in Afghanistan, later in the year, prevented any closer relations with Iran and conditioned the regime's relations with it in the following years.
NOTES


2. Ibid.


6. Ibid., p. 17.


13. Ibid., p. 30148.

17. Ibid., p. 5.
18. Yodfat, pp. 74 - 75
19. Ibid., p. 68.
24. Ibid.
25. Khalilzad, ibid., p. 5.
27. Ibid.
SOVIET INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRANIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS - DECEMBER 1979 TO SEPTEMBER 1980

The pattern of relationship that evolved between Iran and the Soviet Union since the revolution in Iran until the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in late December 1979 was a reaction to Iran's extreme anti-Americanism. Though Khomeini was vehemently against any kind of American influence in Iran, he also regarded the communist influence as un-Islamic and denounced communism. Khomeini persisted in his opposition to communism but never found it expedient or necessary to challenge Moscow directly on any major issue in the way that he challenged Washington.

The revolution in Iran had regional repercussions and the regimes of the neighbouring states were gravely affected by the Islamic propaganda of the revolutionary government of Iran. Saudi Arabia, a prominent US ally and a Sunni Muslim monarchy, was severely affected by the anti-monarchy Islamic revolution of Iran.

Iraq, though tied to the Soviet Union by a treaty of friendship, had started looking westward. The Ba'th party leadership suppressed the Communist party and all kinds of religious opposition. A Sunni minority government ruled over a Shia-majority in Iraq. The Iranian revolution had serious implications for the Ba'thist regime of Iraq. Various territorial, ethnic, religious and cultural issues have traditionally conditioned the relations between Iran and Iraq.

The religious opposition to the Iraqi ruler, Saddam Hussain acquiring a certain dimension, the potentiality of the Iranian revolution to spill over the boundaries of Iran into Iraq, the weakness of the Iranian regime militarily as a result of purges in the military and the withdrawal of supply of military spare parts by the US, as well as the fluidity in Iran's domestic politics, made the ruler in Iraq to invade Iran in order to settle an old territorial conflict. The details of the development which eventually led to a full-fledged war between Iran and Iraq will be discussed in the next chapter.
Another neighbouring state of Iran which was unsuccessful in establishing good relations with it since the Iranian revolution, besides Saudi Arabia and Iraq, was Afghanistan.2

Afghanistan, situated along with Southern border of the Soviet Union, is an immediate eastern neighbour of Iran. With a predominantly Sunni Muslim population, Afghanistan experienced a communist coup in April 1973. In the same year a treaty of friendship was signed between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.

The policies of the new pro-Soviet communist government in Afghanistan, were to a certain extent, anti-Shah and anti-America similar to the Iranian revolution. Yet good relations could not develop between Islamic Iran and Afghanistan. The new government in Afghanistan faced acute resistance internally, which was inevitably characterised as being Islamic. The Afghan resistance drew sympathy from the Iranian religious leaders, prominent among them was Ayatollah Shariatmadari.3

Afghanistan, therefore, became an issue in Iranian-Soviet relations since the communist coup in that country in April 1978. Khomeini criticised Soviet interference in Afghanistan’s domestic matters. The Afghan government retaliated by denouncing the allegations and made overturns for friendship with Iran.4

On June 12, 1979, Khomeini warned the Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov not to interfere in Afghanistan or encourage discontent in the Kurdish and Baluch areas of Iran. Vinogradov denied any Soviet involvement. When Moor Mohammad Taraki was replaced by Hafizullah Amin in late September 1979, the event was regarded as a hardening of Afghan policy towards the freedom fighters and the persistence of Moscow’s aims in Afghanistan.5

The November 4 hostage issue gave an opportunity to the Soviet Union to lend political and economic support to Iran, in the process, distracting Iranian attention from the events in Afghanistan. The Soviet effort to please Iran was shortlived. The Soviet
military intervention in Afghanistan in late December 1979 'in support of the unpopular and ailing pro-Soviet rule in Kabul' resulted in Iranian criticism of the Soviet action.

A new government was set up under Babrak Karmal. The change of regime also brought nearly 85,000 Soviet troops into Afghanistan. The deployment of these troops throughout Afghanistan gave rise to fears for the security of Afghanistan's eastern and Western neighbours, Pakistan and Iran, respectively. At the international level, the Soviet action was highly criticised. The Soviet Union maintained that the government of Afghanistan had 'invited it to send troops under the 1973 treaty of friendship' in order to meet the external threat. In effect, the Soviet Union sent its troops to assist militarily the Afghan government's efforts in combatting Muslim insurgency. As a reaction, the Islamic resistance groups called for a holy war (jihad) to expel the Soviet from their soil.

Initially the/ delayed their response to the development in Afghanistan. Probably the Soviets had warned Iran. Moreover, the Iranians were not in a position to effectively act against the Soviet Union. Internally, Iran was too preoccupied in the American hostage issue and needed every support. Though the activities of the leftist parties were banned in August 1979, by October 1979, due to Soviet pressure, Tudeh was permitted to function. The Tudeh party supported the Islamic regime on the hostage issue against the US. Iran had become isolated at the international level and needed Soviet support. Khomeini, therefore, showed a somewhat delayed and cautious response.

In Afghanistan, after assuming office as head of the government, Babrak Karmal addressed a 'moving letter' to Khomeini and blamed all previous problems on Amin. He pleaded for the consolidation of 'fraternal and friendly Islamic relations' between the Afghans and the Iranians with a view 'to administering an ultimate rebuke to the world - craving imperialism and Zionism'. This failed to effect Khomeini.
Though Khomeini reproached the Soviets and called for their withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Islamic moderates like Bani Sadr and the Foreign Minister, Jodaq Qotbzadeh were more critical of the Soviet action. In a move to balance the anti-American extremism of the fundamentalists, these Islamic moderates vehemently condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and called for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops.

On December 29, 1979, Qotbzadeh issued a protest saying that 'the Islamic government of Iran cannot agree with military intervention by any country in another country, especially military intervention by a superpower in a small country... because Afghanistan is a Moslem country and a neighbour of Iran, the military intervention of the government of the Soviet Union... is considered a hostile measure not only against the people of the country but against all Moslems of the world'.

All the revolutionary forces, save the Tudeh and certain other leftist groups, also condemned the Soviet action.

In a conference of Islamic foreign ministers held in Islamabad in May 1980, Qotbzadeh 'sponsored the admission of Afghan resistance groups and insisted on them being given maximum support'. He also became a member of a three-man Commission, along with the Pakistan foreign minister and the Secretary-General of the Conference, to negotiate a 'solution based on Soviet withdrawal', but this did not progress due to lack of Soviet interest.

Within a period of almost eleven months, since the Islamic revolutionary government came to power in Iran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan took place, much had altered in the Iranian-Soviet pattern of relations. It was not just a change in the external environment as a result of Soviet Union's physical presence in Afghanistan, but also the developments in Iran's domestic politics that brought about a change in Irano-Soviet relations. Iran's relations with the
Soviet Union entered a new phase from late December 1979 which can be broadly analysed under the category of political and economic relations.

POLITICAL RELATIONS

There are several factors, internal and external, that affected Iran's political relations with the Soviet Union in this period. The internal factors that were important in determining the political relations were the power struggle within Iran, the Iranian regime's attitude towards the Tudeh party and the Soviet support for the minorities in Iran.

Throughout 1980, the domestic power struggle continued between the fundamentalists and the Islamic moderates. The Islamic Revolutionary Party (IRP) was established by Ayatollah Beheshti who also organised its military wing called the Islamic Revolutionary Guards. The thorough organisation of the political and military establishments of the fundamentalists was an indication of their efforts at consolidating their power in Iran.

The enactment of the Islamic constitution in late 1979 and its consequent adoption thereafter reflected a total victory for the fundamentalists. The constitution provided for an elective presidential system of government and vested all legislative and judicial powers in a national assembly (Majlis) and a supreme Islamic Tribunal respectively. The individual rights and freedoms were defined in relation to Islamic precepts. Most important the constitution effectively provided for a pivotal role to the fundamentalists in the Iranian Society and 'exalted Khomeini as faqih (an unchallengeable expert in the divine law which the government exists to enforce)'.

Though Bani Jadr was elected President of the Islamic Republic of Iran in early February 1980, the fundamentalists had entrenched themselves in all branches of the government, the bureaucracy and the military and were eventually tightening their hold over the regime.
These developments in Iran's domestic politics changed the Soviet perceptions about the Iranian revolution which was initially described as a popular, anti-imperialist revolution that by them. The Soviet Union had expected the organised working classes to play the leading role as the vanguard of the revolution in Iran as soon as the first phase towards total revolution had ended. This did not take place and eventually the Soviet Union adopted a critical stance towards the Iranian revolution.

The second factor in the domestic politics of Iran which influenced Iranian-Soviet relations was the attitude of the Islamic government towards leftist parties especially the pro-Moscow Tudeh party.

The Tudeh party which was banned during the Shah's period was allowed to exist legally in post-revolutionary Iran. The Tudeh along with other leftist groups had given full support to Khomeini in his opposition to the Shah. For tactical reasons, the Tudeh was the only leftist party which also extended its support to the Islamic Republic in the March 1979 referendum. But by August 1979, Khomeini felt threatened and banned all the leftist groups, including the Tudeh. The Tudeh, after coming in contact with the masses was gaining strength. Also it had consistently supported the Kurdish demand for autonomy within the Iranian Republic and the Islamic regime did not approve of it. Eventually, due to Soviet pressure, the ban on Tudeh was lifted in October 1979. In the November 4 hostage issue the Tudeh fully supported the government.

The Tudeh did not condemn the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. It acquired when the Iranian government decided in early 1930 to close down the Tehran University which was traditionally a major recruiting place for the communists. The support that Tudeh gave to Khomeini demonstrates the pro-Moscow party's desire to survive thereby maintaining an area, however narrow, of Soviet-Iranian relations to continue.
The Soviet Union, apart from the Tudeh, also had a sympathetic group in the IRP. There existed within the clergy, a progressive group led by Ayatollah Syed Mahmud Taleghani which was more amenable to socialism. The views of Ayatollah Taleghani essentially differed from those of Khomeini as the former advocated policies aimed at radical social changes and the redistribution of private property. This group derived Soviet support but this came to an end with the death of Ayatollah Taleghani - soon after the revolution. Hence the Soviet Union could exercise very limited influence in Iranian affairs through the almost ineffective Tudeh party. The Soviets believed that Khomeini's concept of an Islamic state will scarcely allow any democratic, liberal or left wing party to exist.

The Soviet support for minorities in Iran also became an important factor affecting Iran-Soviet relations. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan created fear in Iran. Iran considered Soviet military presence around its eastern border a threat to its territorial integrity. The Soviet Union had openly criticised the Iranian policy towards its minorities, especially the Kurds and Baluchis. It believed that the Iranian policy of suppressing the rights of the minorities to national autonomy within the Iranian Republic was the cause of the minority problems in Iran. More so because these minorities had supported the Iranian revolution in overthrowing the Shah. The Tudeh echoed Soviet views. But when the hostage issue took place on November 4, 1979, the Soviets lessened their support to Kurdish demands.
Foreign Minister Sadeq Qotbzadeh accused the Soviets of supplying arms and money to the Afghans and of providing the counter-revolutionaries with photographs of Iranian military positions. In a letter to Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, he demanded the Soviet withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and also the withdrawal of Soviet support for the Tudeh. Qotbzadeh accused the Soviets of organising their fifth column through their agents in Iran i.e. the Tudeh and publishing its views through Nardom, the newspaper of the Tudeh party.

Among the external factors, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan became a juncture in the continuation of 'normal' political relations between Iran and the Soviet Union. Tension developed on account of the Soviet action as well as the normal Soviet troop movement near the Iranian border. The Soviet support to Iran during the hostage crisis delayed the Iranian response to the Soviet military action in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, with the gradual ascendancy of the fundamentalists in its politics, Iran's attitude towards the Soviet Union changed. Though the Bazargan government had already abrogated Articles V and VI of the 1921 treaty with the Soviet Union, on 22nd January, 1980, the Iranian Revolutionary Council declared its abrogation of the similar articles of Iran's 1921 treaty with the Soviet Union. Iran felt that the treaty might serve as a pretext for Soviet intervention in Iran on the pattern of the one in Afghanistan. Moreover, there were one million Afghan refugees in Iran and they served as a permanent-counter-propaganda against the Soviets. The Afghan refugees also demonstrated before the Soviet embassy in Tehran.

Differences in Soviet and Iranian perspective could be observed in the exchange of official greetings. On 3 February, 1980, Brezhnev sent greetings to Abolhassan Bani Sadr upon his election as President of Iran. He said that Soviet-Iran relations would be based on the principles of good-neighbourliness, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. In his reply Bani Sadr quoted the
independence of nations to choose their social and political order and expressed the hope that the Soviet Union, through its behaviour, would not cause anxiety to its neighbours.  

On the first anniversary of the Iranian revolution Brezhnev sent greetings to Khomeini and Bani Sadr. He termed the revolution in Iran as 'anti-monarchist and anti-imperialist'. Khomeini was not too happy with the Soviet policy of undermining the Islamic character of the Iranian revolution. On 12 February, 1980, he replied 'any aggression against Third World countries and Islamic countries, particularly in this region, is against the principles which should constitute the proper basis and foundations (of relations) between nations.' Khomeini also called for a boycott of the Summer Olympic games to be held in Moscow in 1980.

Iran increasingly came to equate Soviet Union with the United States. Khomeini rejected the achievements of the Socialist societies like those of the Soviet Union and its allies as he considered them atheistic in character. His belief in private property as provided for in Islam was not compatible with the socialist principle that private property and the unequal distribution of power and natural resources were the roots of exploitation. Khomeini's foreign policy slogan 'Neither East, Nor West' meant that 'both the capitalist imperialism of the West and the social imperialism of the Communist World are to be equally rejected'. On 9 August, 1980, while addressing representatives of world liberation movements, Khomeini called the USSR as a big satanic power which is exerting all its power to suffocate Afghanistan. The Soviet Union did not react to this.

The issue of diplomatic representation also affected Iran's relations with the Soviet Union. Iran demanded the closure of one Soviet consulate, either in Resht or Isfahan, and the reduction of the number of its diplomats in Iran. It accused the Soviets of spying and expelled a senior Soviet diplomat, Vladimir Golovanov on similar charges. The Soviets denied these charges. They closed the Iranian consulate in Leningrad and refused to allow the Iranians to open one at Dushanba as they had proposed. The Soviet consulate at Resht was closed on 20 September, 1980 and the number
of Soviet diplomats in Iran was reduced. This led to a strain in Iranian-Soviet diplomatic relations.

**Economic Relations**

On 13th January 1980, in an effort to bring pressure upon Iran over the hostage issue, the UN Security Council, in a resolution, called for economic sanctions against Iran. The Soviet Union vetoed this resolution. The US and some of its allies imposed partial economic embargo upon Iran. This created a unique opportunity for the Soviet Union to enlarge its economic relations with Iran, which it did (as pointed out in the last chapter).

But the course of Iranian-Soviet economic relations suffered a serious setback when the Soviet Union maintained its intransigence over the fixing of new price for the purchase of Iranian natural gas. Iran demanded a five-fold increase in the price of natural gas from 75 cents per 1,000 cubic feet to $3.20 to bring it in parity with the world level. The Soviet Union was not willing to pay more than $2.66 per 1,000 cubic feet. Finally, as negotiations failed in setting this issue, Iran stopped supplying its gas to the Soviet Union from March 1980.

Through a complex arrangement, Soviet Union was to supply gas to Western Europe equivalent to the amount of gas supplied to it by Teheran. Iran would pay a part of its transit charges to the Soviet Union by delivering gas at the rate of 3 million cubic metres of gas per year. Despite Soviet efforts to save the project, it was cancelled. Khomeini considered the gas deal with the Soviet Union as exploitative, similar to the American exploitation of Iranian oil resources.

Prudence on the part of the Soviets led to preventing this issue from dominating other areas of economic cooperation. The Soviet Union emphasised trade prospects as well as Soviet role in Iran's economic development.
The Iranian Minister of Economy and Finance, Reza Salimi, while on a visit to Soviet Union in April 1980, held talks in Moscow regarding further economic and industrial cooperation. He also asked for transit cooperation. He also asked for transit facilities along the Volga river water way. The first trade protocol between the two countries, since the revolution, was signed on June 20, 1980, after a meeting of the Soviet Iranian Permanent Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation. Iran and Soviet Union signed a transit agreement on September 16, 1980, allowing Iranian commercial cargoes through the Soviet territory and Soviet cargoes to go abroad via Iran.

The transit arrangement by rail, road and air between Iran and the Soviet Union actually resulted in easing pressure on the Iranian ports in the Gulf region. Iran needed alternative transit facilities as the border skirmishes between Iran and Iraq intensified. 'On 17 September 1980 the Iraqi Revolution Command Council decided to abrogate the 6 March 1975 agreement with Iran and to restore complete legal and effective sovereignty over the Shatl-al-Arab'. This eventually led a full scale war when on 22 September 1980, Iraq invaded Iran rendering the passage of goods through Iranian ports risky for Iran.

Apart from the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the tension between Iran and Iraq, which developed severity since the Iranian revolution and culminated in a large scale war between the two regional rivals, also became an important factor affecting Iran's relations with the Soviet Union. This aspect of Iranian-Soviet relations shall be discussed in the following chapter.
NOTES

3. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp 104-105.
8. Saikal, ibid.
10. Saikal, ibid., p.27
12. Mortimer, ibid.
13. Saikal, ibid., p.23
14. ibid., pp. 23 - 24
15. Rubinstein, ibid., p.115
17. Tribune, Chandigarh, 4 September, 1979
20. The Statesman, New Delhi, 15th August, 1930
22. Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 14th February, 1980.
23. Yodfat, ibid., p. 68
25. Yodfat, ibid., p.69
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Reznikov, ibid., p.310
31. Yodfat, ibid., p.71
32. Ibid., pp.71-72, and Rubinstein, ibid., p.103.
33. Yodfat, ibid., p.78
34. Rubinstein, ibid., p.113.
36. Rubinstein, ibid., and Yodfat, ibid., pp.73-74.
37. Yodfat, ibid., p.82.
CHAPTER - IV

IRANIAN-SOViet RELATIONS SINCE THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR
(SEPTEMBER 1980 - MARCH 1984)

The present chapter shall deal in part with that phase of Iranian-Soviet relations which came into existence with the start of the Iran-Iraq war until February, 1983 when a major rift took place in the relations between Iran and the Soviet-Union. It shall also cover a further period of one year from March 1983 until March 1984 in order to analyse the pattern of Iran's dealings with the Soviet Union after the development of a break in their relations.

THE IRAN - IRAQ CONFLICT

Revolutionary Iran's relations with the regional states was conditioned by the perceptions that the new regime had of the various states. The fundamentalists in Iran called for a region-wide revolution. They could not overlook the fact that their leader, Khomeini, had been expelled from Iraq at the Shah's request, and that most of the Arab states had failed in liberating 'Palestine'. They exhorted the Arab masses to rise against their rulers similar to the way the Iranians had done.

Iraq, of all the regimes in the region turned out to be the 'real enemy of the Iranian regime'. The secular, Sunni minority government of Saddam Hussain felt most threatened by the declared aims of the Iranian revolution. Khomeini's call for exporting the Islamic revolution beyond Iran had a special appeal for the Shia majority population in Iraq. The Shiites in Iraq have
remained 'traditionally an underdog community and a recruiting ground for the opposition parties'.

Among the major opposition parties, the Iraqi Communist Party had for its membership and support a large proportion of the Shia population. The pro-Moscow communist party which was a powerful force during the revolution of 1958 in Iraq was gradually suppressed. The Baath Party leadership signed a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union in 1972 and consequently the communist party was instructed to support the policies of the existing regime. By 1978-79 the Baath party doubted the activities of the communists in Iraq. They suspected them of infiltrating the armed forces keeping in view the role played by the 'Soviet-trained officers of the Afghan Army and Airforce' in the communist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978. The communists in Iraq were arrested and executed.

As the secular opposition was so strongly suppressed in Iraq, the masses found expression through religious organisations. Prominent among them the al Dawa al-Islamiya (Dawa) was a militant opposition movement with a Shiite religious ideology and leadership. Ayatollah Mohsin al-Hakim regarded by Iraqis as the senior marja-e-taqlid of the Shias led this group.

The other prominent religious group established in 1979 was the Mujahideen under the leadership of Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr who was in 'broad agreement with Khomeini on the political relevance of Islam and the political responsibilities of the Mujtahids'. Though the students and graduates who were members of this
group were inspired by Baqir at-Sadr's ideas yet they did not profess for an institutionalised role of the ulama in politics.\(^7\)

The activities of the religious opposition gained momentum by the success of the Iranian revolution. Demonstrations against the regime in Iraq took place in the Shia town of Al Thawra, the worst slum areas of Baghdad. These were suppressed brutally and Ayatollah at-Sadr was kept under house arrest in Najaf. In July 1979 Saddam Hussain taking full control of power in Iraq assumed the Presidentship of his country. In order to consolidate his authority rigorous purges were conducted against all his opponents within the Bath and the army.\(^8\)

Saddam Hussain's dictatorship was criticised by the newly created organisation called the 'Islamic Liberation Movement of Iraq in Europe. In Iraq the two groups, Dawa and Mujahideen, undertook guerrilla activities against Saddam Hussain's regime. In April 1980 an attempt was made on the life of Tariq Aziz, one of the closest associates of Saddam Hussain. The Shiite opposition was subjected to an extremely harsh treatment and Ayatollah Baqir at-Sadr and his sister were hanged. 'A law was passed making anyone suspected by Dawa membership liable to the same fate.' More than 15,000 Shiites who had been living in Iraq for generations were sent back forcibly to Iran.\(^9\) These repressive measures undertaken by Saddam Hussain demonstrated his regime's vulnerability, and also the influence the Islamic revolution was having over the Shia population in Iraq.
Since the revolution in Iran, tension between Iran and Iraq existed not merely due to the ideological differences, with the Iranian Islamic fundamentalists calling for an overthrow of the secular Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussain, which found itself precariously placed in a Shia majority state. Relations between the two countries were also adversely affected due to the presence of an ethnic group in Iran and Iraq, the Kurds, who vigorously demanded autonomy in their affairs.

The demand for Kurdish autonomy was a common problem for both Iran and Iraq. Given the circumstances the regime of both the countries lent support to the Kurdish dissidents in order to gain leverage with the ruler of the other country. In early 1970s the Shah of Iran had supported Kurdish rebellion in Iraq. On 13 January, 1975 a treaty was signed at Baghdad between Iran and Iraq whereby the Shah undertook to withdraw his support for the Kurdish rebels in Iraq in return for Iraqi recognition of Iranian sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab waterway. After the 1975 rebellion Iraq had granted the Iraqi Kurds with their own autonomous region and a national assembly. However, Kurdish dissatisfaction with the Iraqi regime still persisted.

The Iranian revolution brought about uncertainty in the politics of the country with all the political groups wanting to capitalize from the situation. The Iranian Kurds had supported the revolution against the Shah in the hope of achieving their demands through the new government. The revolutionary regime which was in the midst of a power struggle was not in favour of conceding minority demands. Within two months of the change
of government in Iran, intense fighting broke out between the Kurds and the Revolutionary Guards. The government in Teheran was sure that Baghdad was providing the Iranian Kurds with food supplies as well as military, medical and financial assistance.

Meanwhile the upsurge in nationalistic activity amongst the Iranian Kurds encouraged the Kurds in Iraq. Moreover, the withdrawal of forces by the Iranian government from Kurdish areas of Western Iran on border with Iraq, facilitated free movement of Iraqi Kurds into Iran for refuge as well as weapons and other supplies. The Iraqi government bombed Iranian villages to bring an end to cooperation between the Kurds of Iran and Iraq. The government in Iran protested at these aerial attacks by Iraq. The rising Kurdish activities in both the countries created distrust between Iran and Iraq.

Iraq also supported the minority Arab population in the oil rich Iranian province of Khuzistan. The Sunni Arab dissidents in Khuzistan who considered themselves as citizens of 'Arabistan' demanded autonomy, and further on complete independence. Like the Kurds, these Arabs met with intense repression from Khomeini's regime. Consequently they adopted guerrilla tactics and bombed oil installations. These Iranian Arab guerrillas, who were reportedly being trained in Iraq, increased their sabotage activities. On 30 April, 1980, as the Iranian regime imposed increasingly harsh measures on the guerrillas, the Iranian embassy in London was seized by armed Arabs who held about 20 hostages and demanded more rights for the Arab minority in Iran.
The events in Khuzistan led to deeper involvement of both Iran and Iraq. Border skirmishes took place with more intensity between the two sides.

Since the revolution, whereas Iran appealed to the majority in Iraq to rise against their rulers, the regime in Iraq gave every support to the demands of the minorities within Iran. But the major all pervasive irritant that existed for over a century, was the difference of opinion that Iran and Iraq had over the 'correct dividing line to be drawn down the Shatt al-Arab waterway'. The Shatt is approximately 130 miles in length and is formed by the joining of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. For the last 55 miles of its journey to the Persian Gulf, the Shatt forms the border between Iran and Iraq. The Shatt and the region around it have strategic and economic importance for both countries.

The territorial differences over the Shatt al-Arab Waterway had been the major issue which was temporarily settled through the Algiers Treaty in 1975. At that time the Shah of Iran, through his recently acquired military strength and seeking to play the role of a regional policeman, secured a favourable settlement with Iraq. The treaty provided for Iranian withdrawal of support for the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq, in exchange for Iraqi recognition of Iranian sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab Waterway.

This treaty was considered humiliating by Iraq. The Shah's departure from Iran and the growing uncertainty in Iran made Saddam Hussain review the 1975 treaty. As Khomeini purged the military because of its close alliance with the Shah, the Iranian defence was regarded as
becoming weak by Iraq. Moreover, because of the embargo, the United States refused to supply military spare-parts to Iran. Iran was already diplomatically isolated regionally, and at the international level, the United States was too busy with the hostage issue and the Soviet Union was preoccupied with the events in Afghanistan. At the regional level when Egypt signed the Camp David accords with Israel it lost its leadership role amongst the Arab countries. Iraq was keen to fill this vacuum.

Saddam Hussain, threatened by the Iranian efforts at exporting the Islamic revolution to Iraq, therefore, thought it the most opportune moment to settle the territorial dispute Iraq had with Iran and ultimately emerge as the leader of the Arab world and the dominant power in the Persian Gulf region. Border fighting was already taking place between the two neighbours when on 17 Sept. 1980, Iraq abrogated the 1975 treaty and invaded Iran on 22 September, 1980.  

IRAN-IRAQ/AND THE SOVIET UNION

The tension between Iran and Iraq which culminated into a full scale war provided a test case for the Soviet Union. On the one hand the Soviets were bound by a friendship and cooperation treaty with Iraq signed on 9 April, 1972, on the other it was making every attempt to better its relations with Iran. Initially the Soviet Union declared its neutrality in the war as it considered the war beneficial only to the imperialist forces. The Iranians suspected Soviet Union's declared neutrality as it accused the Soviets of providing arms to Iraq.
Soviet Union maintained that no new agreements have been signed between Iraq and itself and the arms that it is providing are part of the treaty obligations signed before the war started.

Soviet declaration of neutrality in the war was partly due to its deteriorating relations with Iraq. Since 1978 the Bath party in Iran came down heavily against the communists within Iraq. Members of the communist party were arrested and executed. Since the communist coup in Afghanistan and the Soviet military intervention in December 1979 to save the pro-Soviet Kabul regime from collapsing, the Bathist regime in Iraq distrusted Soviet intentions in the region. Moreover, the Soviet support for the present regime in Ethiopia is not appreciated by Iraq which supports the Eritreans in their demand for a separate state. Immediately after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan Iraq proposed an Arab Charter in February 1980 aimed at preventing non-Gulf powers from having a role in the Gulf region. 'The charter stood little chance of acceptance, but the timing of Iraq's proposal of it suggested that its motivation was primarily anti-Soviet, as was the continued provision of Iraqi aid to the Eritrean insurgents'.

Soviet-Iraqi relations worsened when on 8th October, 1980, the USSR and Syria signed a friendship treaty. It was regarded as being aimed against Iraq especially because Iraq had broken off diplomatic relations with Syria in August 1980 and eventually the Iran-Iraq War found Syria supporting Iran.

Soviet Union's neutrality in the War and its decision not to supply arms to Iraq was to the advan-
'not to overstate anti-Soviet rhetoric'. The Soviets were not critical of Iran and Khomeini also did not directly attack the Soviet Union. The Soviets adopted an even-handed policy on its reports of the War. ^ The United States also declared its neutrality in the war. The Carter administration which was negotiating the hostage deal also had in mind the supply of military spare-parts worth $240 million to Iran, which had been paid for by Iran but not received by it yet. Though the hostages were released on 20 January 1981 simultaneously as Reagan came to power, he did not commit himself to supplying the much needed spare parts to Iran. During the period that the Gulf war continued and the hostage crisis was not resolved, Iran remained isolated from the West. 

The Soviet Union wanted to retain its hold over Iraq and at the same time made efforts to influence Iran. As there was greater potential for strategic gains in Iran, arms were supplied to Iran through third parties namely Syria, Libya, North Korea, Cuba and East European countries. Iraq was also acquiring arms through East European countries but the bulk of its supplies came from France and Brazil.

The War between Iraq and Iran did not result in quick gains for Iraq as was speculated. In the early period of the war Iraq did gain some Iranian territory but could not successfully hold on to it. Then followed a phase of stalemate for almost one year with neither party winning substantially. The Iraqis had expected the Iranian opposition to grow stronger but the regime in Iran actually consolidated itself. Displaying greater
resilience than expected, the Iranians were, by late 1981, in a position to launch an offensive against the Iraqis. The Iranians were bent upon exporting their Islamic revolution especially to Iraq and remove Saddam Hussain. On 13 July 1982 Iranian forces crossed over to Basrah which is the second largest city in Iraq and has Iraq's major oil installations. This Iranian offensive ended in early August 1982.

Almost all Arab countries in the region were apprehensive of the prospects of an Iranian victory over Iraq. They provided Iraq with the necessary finances to meet its war expenses. The only Arab states supporting Iran were Syria and Libya and this Arab support for Iran prevented a complete division amongst the Persian Gulf states on the Arab-Persian basis. Because of this the Soviet Union, which already had a limited area of manoeuvrability in the Persian Gulf, was spared the embarrassment of supporting either Iran or Iraq on this distinction. But when Iran made its offensive into Iraq in mid-July 1982 and again in September 1982 neither Soviet Union nor Syria wanted Iraq to be defeated. Though the Soviets were helping Iran they did not want Iran to defeat Iraq or get so strong as to pose a threat to the countries in the region and make Soviet aid less essential to Iran. In such an eventuality the Gulf states would move closer to the United States and allow it the facilities for its Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). Syria too did not want a secular Ba'thist regime to be defeated at the hands of Islamic fundamentalists. Yet, in order to attract Iran the Soviet Union continued to exhibit an even-handed policy, maintaining its neutrality. The Soviet Union
called for an end to the war and appealed to both Iran and Iraq to reach a political settlement through negotiation.26

Relations between Iran and Soviet Union by late 1981 and early 1982 were less hostile. Iran was willing to enhance the level of economic cooperation with Soviet Union and accept more technical aid and arms from the Soviet Union. Khomeini was influenced by that section within Iran which wanted Iran to maintain a functional alliance with the Soviet Union in order to concentrate their efforts against the United States and strengthen their relations with the radical Arab states like Syria, Libya and the PDRY.27

Soviet Union was also training the Revolutionary Guards and Soviet advisers helped Iran organise its intelligence and security forces especially since the explosions in the IRP headquarters on 28 June 1981 and on 30 August 1981, the latter killing many prominent personalities including the President and the Prime Minister.28

The Soviet Union was making every effort to utilise the Gulf War in such a way that it could come closer to Iran without alienating Iraq. The Israeli attack on Osirak, the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June 1981 and the general course of the war made the Soviet Union revise its decision of halting arms supplies to Iraq.29 By early 1982 the Soviet Union was willing to provide Iraq with weapons through third parties. On 17 July 1982, on the occasion of the fourteenth anniversary of the Bath Party's coming to power, Soviet and Iraqi leaders exchanged greetings. They also expressed hope
that the relations between the two countries would progress on the basis of the friendship treaty. Though the Soviet Union and Iraq were looking for alternatives they were keen to prevent any further deterioration in their relations.30

On 1st October, 1982, the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gremyko, in his address to the UN General Assembly maintained that the Soviet Union had traditional ties with both Iran and Iraq and was in favour of ending the war through a negotiated settlement. Since Iran was determined to continue the war the Soviet position appeared closer to that of Iraq which wanted an end to the war.31

Meanwhile the change of leadership in the Soviet Union following Brezhnev's death on 10 November, 1982, brought in Y.V. Andropov as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.32 The new Soviet government under Andropov altered the policies followed by Soviet Union since the Gulf War began. It realised that Iran had not come closer to it and was determined to continue the 'senseless' war which may force Iraq towards the West. Moreover, the Iraqis had been successful in repelling the Iranian attack thereby strengthening Saddam Hussain's position. Soviet Union now wanted to play a more active role in the region and given the circumstances was willing to assist Iraq directly. 'In December 1982 Saddam Hussain announced that the Soviet Union had resumed arms sales to Iraq'. In the beginning of 1983 a highlevel Iraqi delegation headed by Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yasi'h Ramadan and including Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and Chief of Staff Abd al-Jabbar Shanshal visited the USSR. Agreements on supplies of Soviet military equipment were signed thereby increasing
Saddam Hussein was able to rally the support of all within Iraq to fight Iran, similar to the manner in which all forces within Iran supported the Islamic government in its war with Iraq. The Iraqi regime, therefore, felt strong and ordered the release of about 280 communist prisoners and reinstated them in their governmental positions. This development brought Iraq and Soviet Union closer.

IRAN'S INTERNAL POLITICS

The regime in Iran was getting more popular because of its successes in the war. In the domestic power struggle in Iran, the fundamentalists were able to elbow out the moderates like Bani Sadr and tried to gain more support. The intense opposition by the Mujahideen-e-Khalq which increasingly resorted to terrorist means was crushed by the ruling IRP. The ongoing war to be successful required every support of the Iranians. Not only was the Islamic regime successful in eliminating much of the opposition to itself, but the war also created a situation whereby the nationalist sentiments of the Iranians were aroused and they rallied together under the banner of Islam. The fundamentalists were gaining more strength domestically as Iran continued its offensive against Iraq. The Islamic regime now felt confident of its position and therefore decided to put a stop to the political activities of Tudeh, a party which was hitherto permitted to function in Iran. The Tudeh party which until now was supporting the regime in all its endeavours became an object of the regime's repressive policies.
Therefore, in view of the regimes' irreconcilable ideological differences' with the Soviet Union and of its opposition to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, in May 1983 the fundamentalist regime arrested the Tudeh party members on charges of spying for the Soviet Union and outlawed the Tudeh. This marked a turning point in Iran's relations with the Soviet Union. The banning of Tudeh by the Islamic regime put a restriction on Soviet influence in Iran through this institution.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The war had a definite impact on the economies of Iran and Iraq. Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf were inoperable because of the war. This resulted in an increasing use of overland routes by Iran through the Soviet Union especially for trade with European countries, Japan and the Soviet Union itself. The hostage issue having been settled by January 1981, Iran increased its trade relations with West European countries and Soviet territory was used for the transportation of goods. Towards the end of 1981 the expansion of trade led to congestion at the Soviet-Iranian border. Soviet Union helped Iran in overcoming this problem by improving the transport network in the border areas of Iran. As a result the transit of commodities for Iran through the Soviet Union increased substantially from 1 million tons in 1978 to 3.4 million tons in 1981. Along with this the volume of trade between Iran and Soviet Union touched 800 million roubles in 1981 in comparison to 671 million roubles in 1978. Items which were increasingly being exported by Soviet Union
to Iran were timber, fertilizers and steel building equipment and from Iran, dried fruits and concentrates of lead-zinc and copper ores were being supplied to Soviet Union. Iran also supplied 2.2 million tons of oil to Soviet Union.36

Yet another field of cooperation was opened when in October 1981 talks were held in Moscow between delegations from TASS (Soviet News Agency) and the Iranian news agency PARS. Decision was also taken regarding the construction of grain storage silos in Iran by the Soviet Union. But the major event in economic relations between the two countries during this period was the visit on 15 February 1982 to Moscow of the Iranian Energy Minister Hasan Ghafuri-Fard. A protocol on economic and technical cooperation was signed and it included measures to speed up the construction of power stations at Isfahan and Ahwaz. Of the 153 projects under construction in Iran through Soviet assistance, 104 were already commissioned by this time. The most important of these, the Isfahan metallurgical combine expanded its production capacity to almost 1.9 million tons.37

The joint Soviet-Iranian ventures in the construction of over 100 projects in Iran has necessitated the use of Soviet experts and technicians. Also, the Iranians need to be trained in order to operate these projects independently. Cooperation in job-training has been possible through Soviet help by setting up 'training schools for the specialised workers and technicians'. Almost 23,000 Iranians have been trained directly on the job in such technical training schools.
The Soviets have also trained about 1,000 Iranian workers, technicians and engineers in the Soviet Union. By early 1982 Iran was being assisted by about 2,000 technicians and military advisers from the Soviet Union and its allies.\(^38\) By January 1983, according to I.A. Kuliev, First Deputy Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations, there were 1,600 Soviet experts in Iran.\(^39\)

Economic relations between Iran and the Soviet Union were slightly strengthened by the ongoing war and Iran's need to utilise Soviet territory to send and receive its goods from abroad. But this did not result in any substantial increase in trade between the two countries. Iran continuously looked for alternative markets where it could sell its products more profitably keeping in mind Iran's need for revenues to keep the war going. It, therefore, sought to improve its economic relations with West European countries especially Germany and Italy, and with Japan, Turkey, Pakistan and China.\(^46\)

**BANNING OF TUDEH - A BREAK IN RELATIONS**

Since the revolution in Iran, the Tudeh had been supporting the Islamic regime in its policies, waiting for an opportunity to capitalize in the prevailing domestic power struggle. It was permitted to function legitimately unlike other leftist groups. The Tudeh's view that the Islamic revolution was a first step towards the final revolution was an echo of the Soviet position. It worked to intensify anti-American feelings within Iran to the advantage of the Soviet Union.
The onset of the Iran-Iraq war witnessed the Tudeh leading its support to the Islamic regime. By early 1981 with the settlement of the hostage issue, Tudeh's area of influence within that group in the IRP that was sympathetic to it got eroded. Moreover as the regime in Iran launched its repressive policies in an endeavour to consolidate its position, Tudeh also suffered along with the other opposition groups in Iran.

By 1982 Khomeini wanted to eliminate all groups that had played their roles expected of them during the revolution. Had he allowed the Tudeh to function for so long. Eventually even the Tudeh's political activities were curtailed. Its party offices, property and publications were seized and the party cadres were arrested. The Tudeh was forced underground yet it did not join the opponents of the regime.41

In June 1982, Vladimir Kuzichkin, a Soviet diplomat defected to Britain and informed the British that about 400 Soviet and Tudeh agents had infiltrated the Iranian regime. The Teheran regime on receiving this information from the British came down heavily against the Tudeh. A number of arrests were made. On 6 February 1983, the Tudeh party Secretary General Nureddin Kianuri and other leading Tudeh members were arrested on charges of spying for the USSR.42

The Soviet Union gave a restrained response to this development. Pravda maintained that the accusations against the Tudeh leaders were of a 'groundless and slanderous nature'. It also clarified the Soviet position that the Soviet Union was not seeking any special rights or advantages for itself in Iran. That it has
no territorial claims in Iran and is not interfering in Iran's internal affairs.43

Meanwhile, on 30 April 1983 in an interview on Tehran television "Kianuri confessed to espionage treachery and deceit. He admitted that the Tudeh party had been guilty of six errors: dependence on the Soviet Union and engaging in espionage on its behalf; illegally retaining secret arms caches, maintaining a secret political organisation; establishing a secret group of officers who became an agency for collecting information for dispatch to the USSR; infiltrating the administration and arranging illegal departures from the country".44 These "confessions" were a result of torture as alleged in a NVOI broadcast.

On 4 May 1983 the Tudeh party was banned, more arrests were made and about 18 Soviet diplomats were expelled from Iran.45 Tudeh was banned due to internal political factors, but it was also a function of Iran's relations with the Soviet Union. It was a reaction to the renewed Soviet arms supplies to Iraq and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.46

The ban imposed on the Tudeh party reflected a worsening of Iranian-Soviet relations. There persisted certain areas in which the views of Tehran and Moscow were opposed. The Soviet Union criticised the Iranian domestic policies for not having improved the material lot of people since the revolution. In July 1982, the Soviet Union wanted the Iran-Iraq war to cease but as Iran continued the war, Soviet Union criticised it and made much publicised deliveries of Soviet arms to Iran. Regarding the continued Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, although Iran did little in practice to support the Afghan resistance, Soviet Union resented Iranian criticism of its presence in Afghanistan.47
In the economic field one major issue that remained unresolved was the question regarding the resumption of supplies of natural gas from Iran to the Soviet Union. Whenever the Soviets raised the issue, it was ignored by the Iranians. Instead of shipping the gas through the Soviet Union, the Iranians were talking of constructing a similar pipeline through Turkey to supply the natural gas to Western Europe. The Soviet Union was, therefore, being denied a vital economic advantage that it could have availed if the construction of IGAT-2 was renewed and gas was supplied to it. Moreover, the development of improved economic relations between Iran and Turkey and Pakistan was detrimental to Soviet interests, economically and politically. The Soviet Union accused Turkey and Pakistan of taking Iran back into CENTO through a 'backdoor of economic dependence'.

Since the commencement of the Gulf war until the phase when the Tudeh was banned, Iran's political relations with the Soviet Union suffered serious flaws. The Soviet efforts to gain influence in Iran by offering direct arms aid to it were futile as Iran refused the offer. Iran kept doubting Soviet neutrality because of the renewal of direct Soviet arms aid to Iraq. Iran bought arms independently in the arms market and from other sources instead of accepting Soviet arms directly.

The economic relations were enhanced only to the extent that Iran depended on greater use of Soviet overland routes because of the war. Apart from this, there were no substantial increases in the economic relations. Iran consistently adhered to its policy of not supplying gas to the Soviet Union at prices below the world level. It asserted its independent posture by seeking diversified sources for trade. The ban on Tudeh which was more a function of Iran's internal politics also affected adversely its relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was deprived of the platform through which it could exercise influence in Iran. The Soviets viewed with suspicion Iran's improving economic relations with Turkey and Pakistan and considered it an effort to take Iran back into CENTO.
NOTES


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 360-361.


7. Ibid., p. 364.

8. Ibid., p. 365.

9. Ibid.


14. Snyder, ibid., p. 159.

15. Ibid.

16. Grummond, ibid., p. 163.

17. Ibid., p. 7.

22. Yodfat, ibid., p. 93.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 97.
30. Yodfat, ibid., p. 110.
31. Ibid., pp. 133-134.
32. Ibid., p. 130.
33. Ibid., pp. 134-135.
34. Ibid., p. 135.
35. Saikal, ibid., p. 29.
37. Ibid., pp. 101-103.
38. Ibid., p. 102.
39. Ibid., p. 131.
41. Yodfat, ibid., p. 142.
43. Yodfat, ibid., p. 143.
44. Ibid.
45. Saikal, ibid.
46. Yodfat, ibid., p. 144.
The geographical location of Iran which shares 1,500 Kms. of common boundary with the Soviet Union in the north has resulted in constant interaction between the two countries for a long time. These interactions have brought about a distinct pattern of relationship between Iran and the Soviet Union which can be categorised as cultural, political, military and economic. Irrespective of the nature of the two states, it has been observed that a certain degree of normalcy prevailed in the political relations of Iran and Soviet Union which was reflected in their economic relations.

The economic relations between the two countries began during the rule of Ivan the Terrible. At that time there was no specific treaty to regulate the economic relations. Military interaction commenced with the emergence of Peter the Great who led a movement of Russian expansionism into the northern Persian empire. Nadir Shah also pursued an aggressive Persian policy towards Russia. Katherine and Nicholas I, through their military endeavours reinforced Russian dominance in the area. Through the Treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmanchay (1828), Russia established its pre-eminence and carved an area of jurisdiction in Iranian affairs. The Treaty of Turkmanchay also established the present boundary line between Iran and Soviet Union. Russia laid the foundation of economic relations with Iran with the construction of the Transcaucasian railway line in the 1888, a naval base at Ashurda and assisting in the setting up of the Persian Cossack Brigade.

With the success of the Bolshevik revolution an ideological factor was introduced into the relations between Iran and Soviet Union. Yet the state interest dictated Soviet policy towards Iran. In an effort to bring about normalisation of relations, Lenin renounced all previous treaties providing special concessions to Russia as null and void. The new rulers in Soviet Union also declared the abandonment of Czarist Russia's policy of expansionism.
Anglo-Soviet rivalry dominated the politics of Iran since the mid-eighteenth century. In 1907 an Anglo-Russian convention was signed through which Iran was divided into spheres of influence between Britain and Russia. During the World War I the two rivals came together against Germany and occupied Iran. In the struggle that started Britain emerged stronger. In 1920, the revolutionary government of Soviet Union supported the rebellion in Azerbaijan and forced a British retreat. The Bolshevaks did not want to provide any pretext for further British expansion. In 1921, the Friendship Treaty was signed between the Soviet Union and Iran with the aim of improving Iranian-Soviet relations and has served as the basis of their relations since then.

Although from the 1927 Treaty of Neutrality until the 1935 economic agreements, many treaties were signed between Iran and Soviet Union, Iran harboured a doubt regarding Soviet intentions in the region. It considered as offensive the two articles (Art.5&6) of the I92I Treaty which provided for the Soviet interference in Iranian affairs and thereby undermined Iran's sovereignty.

Reza Shah who came to power in 1926 made consistent efforts to balance the Anglo-Soviet rivalry and made Iran independent by diversifying his sources of external assistance. He was suspicious of the Communists in Iran and banned the Tudeh in 1937.

In World War II, Reza Shah's neutrality was overruled by Britain and the Soviet Union, who through an Allied agreement occupied Iran. The Tripartite Agreement (Jan.,1942) provided for the withdrawal of allied forces within six months of the close of the War. Britain withdrew as scheduled but the Soviet Union continued its occupation, strengthened the Tudeh and assisted the separatists in establishing the autonomous Republics of Azerbaijan and Mahabad.

In the oil crisis of 1944 strong nationalists like Mossadeq were successful in postponing oil concessions to any country till after the war. The Soviet Union and Tudeh distrusted Mossadeq, criticised Iran and refused to withdraw its forces. The Soviet Union evacuated Iran only in May 1946.
The political relations between Iran and Soviet Union, therefore, were at their lowest during this time and the economic relations were negligible. Tudeh was outlawed in 1949 after an attempt was made on the life of Mohammed Reza Shah who replaced his father Reza Shah.

As the Prime Minister of Iran, Mossadeq led an extremely nationalistic and independent posture stopping all preferential treatment to any of the foreign countries. The Soviet Union considered him as pro-British. Mossadeq's extreme independent policies and Soviet Union's criticism of those policies made the Shah more suspicious of the Soviet Union. In order to minimise the domestic and external threats to his regime, the Shah of Iran turned for assistance to the United States, a non-proximate superpower which had assumed Britain's role in the region.

Iran's alliance with the United States through the Baghdad Pact (1955) and the mutual security pact (1959) was meant to guarantee Iranian security. It also served the U.S. policy of containing communism in the region. In the background of the cold war, Iran's alliance with the U.S. became an instrument and issue in the Iranian-Soviet relations. Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union during this period were conditioned by Iran's pro-west and pro-U.S. stance.

After Stalin's death, Khrushchev made renewed efforts to normalise Iran-Soviet relations by offering to settle the boundary problems between the two countries and the financial claims that arose due to World War II. A process of normalisation was set in motion with the exchange of visits by the leaders of the two countries. The changing international context, i.e. the emerging thaw in the superpower relations also contributed to this process. President Kennedy of the U.S. was not in favour of granting much arms aid to Iran and pressed the monarchy for adopting liberal measures. The Shah's White Revolution was not significantly supported by the Americans but the Soviet Union encouraged the Shah's socio-economic reforms and the programme of heavy industrialization in Iran. The White Revolution actually provided an opportunity to the Soviets to demonstrate to Iran the benefits of having close economic relations with the Soviet Union. It assisted Iran financially and materially in implementing the White Revolution.
Economic and trade relations between Iran and Soviet Union registered a tenfold increase. Many important economic agreements were signed between Iran and Soviet Union. Iran provided natural gas to Soviet Union in exchange for Soviet supplies of conventional weapons.

Soviet Union encouraged the White Revolution at the expense of their support to the Communist reforms proposed in it to be instrumental in changing the Iranian society, polarizing the classes and undermining the political influence of the big landlords. The Shah also benefitted from the Soviet support. Iran received economic and technological aid from the Soviet Union and also a market to sell its gas.

Political developments in the region affected the good relations that had come to exist between Iran and the Soviet Union. Iran sought to dominate the Gulf region. It declared the 1937 Treaty it had with Iraq to be null and void. This treaty had established Iraqi sovereignty over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway. The Kūdishe problem was another impediment in the good relations between Iran and Iraq. The Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship with Iraq in 1972 under which it increasingly armed the Iraqis. The growing conflict between Iran and Iraq became a factor in Iran's relations with the Soviet Union.

From 1974 onwards Iran's relations with the Soviet Union entered a phase of hostility. Iran increased its military programmes, continued its membership in military alliances like CENTO, permitted the US to establish electronic data collecting centres near the Soviet border, supported Oman against the Dhofari rebels who were being helped by the Soviet Union and the PDRY, and continued its hostility towards the pro-Soviet Arab countries like Iraq, Syria and PDRY. Soviet Union added to the tense relations by arming Iraq.

The establishment of good relations between Iran and China also became a factor in Iranian-Soviet relations. Both China and Iran were concerned at the Communist coup in Afghanistan (April 1978) and the situation in PDRY.

Iran increased its role in the Persian Gulf area and assumed the role of a regional policeman. With the declaration of Nixon Doctrine (1969) Iran also strove to
protect American interests in the region. The Shah did not abandon his pro-West posture till the end. The political differences that arose between Iran and Soviet Union persisted due to the presence of many irritants, regional and international. These political differences did not hinder the economic cooperation between Iran and Soviet Union. Their increasing trade relation proved to be a stabilizing influence in their mutual relations.

The Iranian revolution brought about changes in the pattern of Iranian-Soviet relations. Stable economic relations, that had been cultivated between Iran and Soviet Union during the past fifteen years made the Soviets initially hesitant in supporting the opposition to the Shah. But by late 1978 Moscow encouraged the anti-Shah movement through the Tudeh.

The Iranian revolution, which was characterised as anti-imperialist, was supported by the Soviet Union on account of its anti-Americanism. The foreign policy stance of Khomeini, reflected in the slogan 'Neither East Nor West' was considered not so detrimental to the Soviets. Iran was heavily dependent on the US during the Shah's period. It altered its security perspective by pulling out total dependence on the US. Iran's withdrawal from CENTO, repudiation of arms agreements with US, closing of the US electronic data collecting centres near the Soviet border, halting the operations of the multinational corporations and the expulsion of Americans from key posts in Iran were welcomed by the Soviets. The Soviets gained immense military advantage from the altered Iranian foreign policy. Iran's assertion of independence, its adherence to non-alignment and solidarity with Third World countries, breaking of ties with South Africa and Israel, strengthening of relations with PLO opposition to American sponsored Camp David accords was a position nearer the Soviet stance in international politics. It appeared that the Soviet Union was going to make an impact on Iran given the revolutionary situation there.
The Soviet Union regarded the Iranian revolution as a first step towards total revolution in Iran. Its consistently encouraged the anti-American sentiment in Iran thereby hoping to influence Iran. For the first time since World War II the situation in Iran provided the Soviet Union with an opportunity to exercise its influence there. While Khomeini was pronouncing his revolutionary sentiments, he established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and allowed the Tudeh to function within limits. Although it appeared initially that Iran's anti-Americanism is to the advantage of the Soviet Union, the development of relations between Iran and the Soviet Union during the post-revolutionary phase projects a different picture.

The ideological factor was once again introduced in Iranian-Soviet relations, when Iran was declared an Islamic Republic. Despite opposing ideologies, the Soviet Union supported Iran in order to gain as much influence as possible at the cost of the decline of US position in that country.

Amongst the factors that affected the development of smooth political relations between Iran and the Soviet Union was the issue of Soviet support for Kurds and Baluchis. The Iranians believed that the Soviet Union supports the Kurds and the Baluchis economically and militarily so as to establish independent states for them. The Soviet Union does support Kurdish and Baluchi resistance but only to the extent of creating autonomous regions within the Iranian federation.

Another issue pertained to the appeal of the Iranian revolution across the Soviet border to the Soviet Central Asian Muslims. The Iranian revolution has less chances of being successful amongst these people as they are predominantly Sunni Muslims and enjoy a standard of living well above that enjoyed by most Muslim nations. Yet Iran continues its verbal propaganda aimed at these Muslims and the Soviet Union continues to strive for good state-to-state relations between Iran and itself.
The American hostage issue provided the Soviet Union with an opportunity to maintain and increase its influence in Iran. The hostage issue and the consequent imposition of economic sanctions against Iran led to an improved economic relations between Iran and Soviet Union and its allies. As Khomeini considered the price of natural gas supplied to Soviet Union as exploitative Iran halted the supply of gas to the Soviet Union.

The opportunities that arose in post-revolutionary Iran for the Soviet Union could not be utilised by it. The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan prevented closer relations and conditioned Iran's relations with the Soviets in the years that followed.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 was preceded by a communist coup in April 1978 and the signing of a friendship treaty between Afghanistan and Soviet Union. In this predominantly Sunni Muslim country, the Islamic insurgents were supported by the Iranian regime which condemned Communist interference in non-aligned and Islamic Afghanistan. Iran considered the Soviet support to its revolution and Tudeh's support to the taking of American hostages as an attempt to divert Iran's attention away from the Communist takeover in Afghanistan and the Soviet Military intervention that followed. The Iranians criticised the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and labelled Soviet action as equally satanic as the United States.

The tension between Iran and Iraq developed severity since the Iranian revolution and culminated into a full scale war between the two regional rivals, also influenced the course of Iranian Soviet relations. The Soviet Union faced an awkward situation because, on the one hand it was bound to Iraq with a friendship treaty and on the other it was trying to improve its relations with Iran. As the strain were developing in Soviet Union's relations with Iraq, the Soviets declared neutrality in the war and reportedly stopped supplying weapons to Iraq.
The Soviet Union considered the forces and would undermine the unity of the forces opposing imperialism. Iran doubted Soviet Union of siding with Iraq.

The Soviet Union was interested in ending this complex situation. It repeatedly called for ceasing of hostilities between Iran and Iraq and the need to arrive at a political settlement through negotiation. Iran retained its independence by accepting Soviet arms only through third parties like Libya, Syria, North Korea, Cuba, and East European countries. Iraq alone received arms through European and Western sources.

When Andronov assumed Soviet leadership in November 1982, the Soviet Union altered its position on the war as Iran had not moved closer to the Soviet Union and despite the latter's efforts was determined to continue the war. Also, Iraq was gaining more strength and was successful in repelling the Iranian attacks. Soviet Union did not want Iran to win the war against Iraq and create instability in the region. The identity of Soviet-Iraqi interests since 1982, aroused Iranian suspicion. Due to internal and external factors the Tudeh became a target of the Islamic regime's measures against the opposition. Tudeh was banned in May 1983 and this marked the political relation between Iran and the Soviet Union.

While trying to improve relations with Iran, the Soviet Union confronted certain problems. Khomeini was tolerating the Soviet Union but was highly anti-Communist. Iran's distrust of Soviet intentions led the Islamic regime to abrogate the articles (Art.5&6 of the 1921 Treaty) which considered offensive also by the previous rulers of Iran. Soviet Union believed that the entire treaty was still in force. Soviet Union did not approve of the manner in which Iran was dealing with its minorities, like Kurds and Baluchis. The Soviet Union disliked Iranian hostility towards Tudeh and was irked by the regime's decision to ban the Communist Party.

The economic relations between Iran and Soviet Union received impetus due to the hostage crisis and the Iran-Iraq War. Due to the economic sanctions against Iran, Soviet Union extended its help to Iran to meet its economic difficulties.
The War between Iran and Iraq forced Iran to depend on Soviet over-land routes to ship its goods abroad. These factors increased Iranian-Soviet economic interaction. The only issue which remains unresolved is that of the supply of Iranian gas to the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union refuses to pay the price for Iranian gas equivalent to the world level prices, Iran has stopped its supply of gas to the Soviets. Iran has sought a more independent posture on this issue and is talking about constructing a similar pipeline through Turkey to supply its gas to Western Europe.

The hostage issue had isolated Iran, but since the issue has been solved Iran has sought to improved its relations with the Western nations. Iran now has economic relations with Western, Eastern and the Third World Countries.

The Soviet policy towards Iran since the Islamic revolution was aimed at minimising American and Western influence in Iran. The opportunities to attain this objective were not created deliberately/anti-Westernism and anti-Americanism of the Islamic regime. These were certain constraints that hindered the complete utilization of these opportunities; these were the limits placed by the Islamic government on the area of influence that Soviet Union could build for itself in Iran as well as developments like the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq War.

Iran and Soviet Union had their distinct characteristics in terms of different political systems and differing ideological orientations. But state interest guided the Soviet Union and Iran who cultivated a mutually advantageous relationship reflected in their sound economic relations.

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