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## Analysis of the Foreign Policy Approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran in South Asia Region

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### Abstract

#### Introduction

The foreign policy approach plays an important role in the development of regional and global relations for countries. Especially in the age of globalization, when the ties and relations between countries in the international arena are completely intertwined; It can even be said that the special nature of the globalization period is such that the least available capacity to communicate with other countries has a positive effect on the international image of that country. In regional relations, the foreign policy approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been different approaches and behaviors towards the geopolitical regions around it. South Asia, as an independent geopolitical region based on Sol Cohen's theory and its transformation into a third geostrategic realm, can be one of the regions that offers the necessary potential to change the

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country's foreign policy approach to this region.

Cross-border national interests and demands of countries in the last decades of the 20th century caused globalization. The globalization of the market economy and the economization of the world system, which gained a lot of speed since the last decade of the 20th century, greatly boosted the geo-economic and geo-strategic competitions in the world. These important developments in the world system have encouraged regionalism and turning to cooperation and regional groupings and convergences to make effective competition between the regions of the world a reality in the global geopolitical system of the postmodern era (Mojtahedzadeh, 2012 : 185). In any case, the foreign policy of countries in the era of globalization is required to respect the national interests of the people of that country. As one of the countries in the world that is located in the geopolitical and geo-economics region of the Middle East, Iran follows the trend of regionalism and regional relations in its foreign policy.

Iran's historical-civilizational, geopolitical and political-security position in the regional and international security system is such that it is inevitable to adopt different approaches in operationalizing Iran's foreign policy. The three main approaches in Iran's foreign policy are: geographical and geopolitical approach, cultural and historical approach, ideological and political-security approach. During the past decades, Iran's foreign policy has had a challenge in creating a balance between these three approaches, which in a way can be considered as a theoretical challenge of focusing on different regional systems in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf and South Asia (Barzegar, 2009 : 25).

### **Methodology**

The main purpose of this article is to analyze the foreign policy approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran in regional relations with the South Asian region. The main question is that "what is the position of the South Asian region in Iran's foreign policy relations and approach"? To answer this question, this research has been done using descriptive-analytical research method and data collection method is from library sources and Internet sites.

### **Result and discussion**

In any case, developments in Iran and developments in the international system at the regional and global levels have created a sinusoidal trend in the country's foreign policy. As in most experts' opinions, there is a consensus regarding this process. From the colorfulness to the three riddles that have been proposed

for foreign policy, they all tell the behavior of Pandoli and Sinus. For example, a single policy has not been followed in the regional relations between Iran and South Asia. Before the Islamic Revolution, the expansion of geopolitical depth in foreign policy was from the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean. So that when the largest air-sea base of the Indian Ocean was established in Chabahar in 1975, it was announced by the then president of the country. Those who are familiar with geopolitical issues know that our geopolitical sensitivities include the entire Indian Ocean. So that the proposal to form a union of Indian Ocean countries was raised and welcomed by the governments of that region (Mojtahedzadeh, 2012 : 142).

The subcontinent region (South Asia) is very important for Iran. Among the reasons for the political-security importance of this region for Iran are the long borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan, the existence of ecological minorities (Balochs), the weakness of the nation-state structure and fragile governments in this region, political instability, trade and drug smuggling. Narcotics and the threats arising from it, Islamic fundamentalism and international terrorism, the situation of Shiites and finally the presence of the United States and its military bases in the region. Culturally and socially, a large part of this region is considered part of the Iranian civilization, so that Afghanistan can be considered a Persian-speaking nation-state. From an economic point of view, the sub-continent region has not been given much attention due to insecurity and instability, but the peace pipeline extending to the region (Pakistan-India) can bring economic and security advantages for Iran. In general, the subcontinent is the most important geopolitical region around Iran after the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.

In relation to Iran's territorial situation, the concept of geopolitical dependence can be used to expand regional relations with South Asian countries. The dependence of the national interests and goals of a country or political actor on the values and geographical advantages of other countries and political actors is called geopolitical dependence. The distribution pattern of the supply of advantages as well as the demand for geographical advantages is unbalanced. Therefore, places and geographical spaces and then the human groups living in them, nations and governments need and depend on each other. Geopolitical dependence reflects this fact. It should be said that governments try to reduce the level of their geopolitical dependence on other actors, and in unavoidable situations, use balancing tools and mechanisms and increase the dependence of other political units on themselves. Although geopolitical and geographical advantages have a wide range, some of them are: communication route and corridor, port, energy supply source, water resources, export markets, defense

and military base, scientific, cultural, historical, religious centers and institutions and ... (Hafezniya, 2006: 146-147). For example, the country of Afghanistan needs a land route to connect to open waters, which can be built from the east of Iran, considering the level of relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Figure 3 shows the corridors that Iran can provide for India. Therefore, it can be said that the geopolitical position of Iran has the ability to create geopolitical dependence for the countries of the South Asian region.

### **Conclusion**

What is important in regional relations is efficient foreign policy and active diplomacy so that a government can achieve the national interests of its respective country. Iran can be more successful in its regional relations due to its abundant energy resources. As a geopolitical region and the need for fossil energy, South Asia has the necessary potential in economic and political development. According to the theory of the spatial structure of the geopolitical system of the world, which was proposed by Cohen, the South Asian region as an independent geopolitical region that is mentioned in this theory and it is predicted that in the future, as the third geostrategic region, it will be divided into two geostrategic regions (Maritime and Berry) added to Cohen's theory, can strengthen regional relations for Iran through dependence on fossil energy. however, what can be seen and can be acknowledged is that the approach of Iran's foreign policy to the South Asian region lacks sufficient attention and it can be said that the position of this region in the country's foreign policy is among Iran's important regional priorities. It is not a good place to pay attention to the lack of actions and regional relations observed in this region.

**Key words:** Foreign Policy, Regional Relations, Regionalism, Islamic Republic of Iran, South Asia.