Chapter 7

Islamic Republic of Iran

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ABSTRACT

Iran has been a home for prominent civilizations since early ages thanks to its geographical position, at the intersection point of Europe and Asia. Iran also is a very important market for Turkey. Its population is growing and several ethnical groups takes place in the country. Its economy is growing despite pressure from international society; these restrictions are lifted in the near future. Relations between Iran and Turkey are important for Middle East politics; Ankara and Tehran’s lack of cooperation before the issues in the Middle East led the region to further tribulations, resulted in a decrease in their activities not only in the Middle East but also on a global scale. The relations became closer during AK Party governments in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

Iran has been a home for prominent civilizations since early ages thanks to its geographical position. The strategic position of Iran that is located at the intersection point of Europe and Asia since early ages thanks to the Ancient Silk Road became even more important after the exploration of oil reserves in the country. Bordering with Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Caspian Sea, Arabic Sea and Persian Gulf, Iran is the 17th largest country in the world with its 1.648.195 km² surface area. Iran’s population totals almost 80 million and consists of Persian, Azeri, GilakiMazdarani, Kurdish, Arab, Lurs, Baloches and Turkomans. Iran’s official language is Persian. However, there are many communities that speak Turkish, Kurdish, Turkoman, Arabic and Balochi.

Following the revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, Mohammed Reza Shah fled from the country and Iran Islamic Republic was established instead of Pahlavi Dynasty. Iran has re-established its state with the Supreme Leader at its core. Per Iran constitution, sovereignty, legislation, jurisdiction and execution can only be performed under Supreme Leader’s supervision. In this context, Supreme Leader is the essential authority in the constitution as well as in the actual state mechanism. Iran state

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mechanism is similar to other regimes for its founding institutions. However, what is different is that the Supreme Leader is the only authority in Iran’s administration. Separation of powers is valid in Iran; however, these powers are subject to Supreme Leader’s supervision.

Iran is a very important market for Turkey because of its 79 million population, geographical proximity, cultural similarities, language and Turkey’s sympathetic image amongst Iran society. Iran is the shortest route for Turkey to reach Mid Asian markets. Despite the huge cooperation potential, economic relations between Iran and Turkey has been limited due to governmental issues in Iran, political crisis, protective economy policy and related import-export controls, high tariffs, non-tariff barriers, inefficiencies at transportation and border gates, the problems in banking industry, inefficiency of highway and railway networks, low number of flights and problems encountered at the border gates. Since 2003, a resurgence in commercial relations between Turkey and Iran and in mutual investment activities has been observed.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND HISTORY OF IRAN

General Information

See Table 1 for general demographics relating to Iran.

History of the Country

The name of Iran derived from “Ariana” word in Pahlavi language. This word is an adjective for “Aryan” (Hunkan, 2016, 77). Iran means the “Country of the Aryans” (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tahran Büyükelçiliği, 2014a).

As one of the Indo-European tribes, Iran tribe was spread from Central Asia to Atlas Ocean coastline and inhabited many parts of the world following the exploration of the new world (Yıldırım, 2010, 7)

Primary civilization that inhabited the territory of today’s Iran belonged to Persians whom are presumed to settle in the area around B.C. 2800 (Ekonomi Bakanlığı Tahran Ticaret Müşavirliği, 2015). An important geographical location which Iran has between Anatolia and India and Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf has been a home for prominent civilizations since early ages, a gateway between east and west and also north and south and a hub in the middle of trade routes (Barjough, 2015, viii). Iran played a key role in the trade between Far East countries and Mediterranean (Sivrioglu, 2015, 40-41). A prominent hub throughout history for its location on migratory routes, Iran evolved to a new geopolitical center with its rich oil resources since the beginning of 20th century (Barjough, 2015, viii)

Iran’s historical journey can be observed under various categories (Ekonomi Bakanlığı Tahran Ticaret Müşavirliği, 2015):

- **Achaemenid Empire (B.C. 559-330):** Recorded history of Iran began with the Achaemenid Empire founded in B.C. 559 and grew to a large civilization between B.C. 559-330.
- **Hellenistic Period and Parthians (B.C. 330- B.C.220):** During Hellenistic Period (B.C. 330-176) cultural exchange began between West and East whom developed a habit of living together. Parthian reign began in B.C. 176 in Iran and Mesopotamia. Parthians and Sasanians have played a great deal of importance in their neighbors’ martial development (Cihan, 2015, 92)
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