**FINAL PAPER RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM**

1. **Name of the Student**. Saket Khanna.

2. **Subject of the Paper**. Engaging Iran Post the Nuclear Agreement – The Indian Endeavour – Potential Reference for Israel.

3. **Background**.

(a) Ever since her independence in 1947, India has had a natural disadvantage with regard to her relations with Islamic countries, especially nations in the Middle-East. Pakistan, a Sunni majority country, became the ‘designated’ nation for Muslims of the sub-continent, even though India had a larger Islamic population. The partition also resulted in India losing her historical land boundaries with Iran and Afghanistan. The shadow of her traditional, sub-continental rivalry with Pakistan has remained an enduring factor for nearly five decades post independence. However, over the past two decades, India has increasingly managed to distance herself from her troublesome neighbour, in order to forge closer ties with many Islamic countries in the Middle-East. Globalisation, the end of the Cold War era and the increasing importance of economic considerations have all helped in this regard.

(b) With Iran, India had indifferent relations till the end of the Cold War. But in recent years, building upon their historic cultural ties, bilateral relations have scaled new heights. There has, of course been, influence of China’s proximity to Iran, and its special relationship with Pakistan. Similarly, the momentum gained in recent years in the India-US strategic partnership has also had its fallout on the India-Iran bilateral ties. The relationships were nebulous with a fine balance being maintained between opposing interests of the various countries.

(c) However, the sanctions imposed upon Iran about ten years back required the various players in the region to take a direct stand on their policy with respect to Iran. For India, it was a foreign policy dilemma of counter balancing the China-Pakistan influence in Iran on one hand, while continuing its growing bonds with the US. It was also a clash of ideology within India, for she was traditionally opposed to unilateral sanctions, while also being wary of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Superimposed on these complications were India’s economic considerations and energy security concerns. The situation required intense and hectic diplomatic efforts on all fronts.

(d) Considering India’s dilemma’s regarding the sanctions on Iran, the nuclear deal was welcomed in the country, contrary to the reactions in Israel. It has certainly opened up the supply of energy from Iran, as well as renewal of several economic projects which had been stalled in the last few years. The future of such possibilities and other geo-strategic initiatives will be examined in this paper.

4. **Goal of the Paper**. To examine India’s experience of engaging with Iran and the extent of future possibilities post the nuclear deal, while also examining potential references for Israel in the pocess.

5. **Research Questions**.

1. What are the drivers of relations between India and Iran?
2. How are the fundamentals of this relationship affected by the interests of large players like China and the US?
3. What are the future possibilities of relations between India and Iran, including multilateral and geo-strategic initiatives?
4. What are the reference points that can be derived for Israel from the Indian experience, if any?

6. **Research Claims**. Nil.

7. **Method of Presenting the Idea of the Research (Outline)**.

(a) **Chapter 1** - **Introduction and Background**.

- Brief background bringing out the historical and cultural ties between India and the Middle East, including Iran (Persia), from ancient times to independence (1947).

- Geo-political changes in 1947 due to the partition – effect on India’s relations with Islamic nations in the Middle East.

- The effect of India’s Non-Aligned policy on relations with countries in the region.

(b) **Chapter 2 – India – Iran Relations from 1947 till the Nuclear Agreement**.

- Fluctuating relationship.

- Relations before the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

- Relations after the Islamic Republic was formed in Iran, and the impetus after 1989.

- China-Iran relations and India’s concerns – Pakistan as a proxy?

- India’s drift towards USA and its effect on relations with Iran.

(c) **Chapter 3 – Sanctions on Iran – Effect on India-Iran Relations**.

- Several dilemmas for India – Diplomatic : balancing China vs US relations; Ideological : preventing nuclear proliferation in the Middle East vs opposition to unilateral sanctions; energy security concerns.

- Sanctions on Iran in 2006 and India’s economic imperatives.

- Balancing India’s national interests and accommodating the United States vis-à-vis the sanctions.

(d) **Chapter 4 – The Nuclear Deal and Beyond**.

- India’s reaction to the nuclear deal and renewal of stalled relations. Progress on many joint projects and initiatives.

- Future possibilities in bilateral relations and multilateral / geo-strategic regional initiatives.

(e) **Chapter 5 – India-Iran-Israel – A Fantasy Triangle or a Genuine Possibility?**

- Briefly examine the trajectory of Israel-Iran relations and the causes of the current deep rooted mistrust.

- Analyse the rationality of Iran’s behaviour towards Israel, including the nuclear threat.

- Is there anything of ‘common interest’ between the two nations – an attempt to look at the possibilities beyond the obvious adversarial rhetoric.

- Can India bring anything to the table, if at all, based on her historic and recent experiences with Iran?

- Conclusion and recommendations.

8. **The** **Importance/Novelty of the Paper**. This paper aims to research the Indian experience of engaging with Iran and India’s geo-strategic interests in the Middle east and Central Asia, an aspect not very well known outside the sub-continent.

9. **Connection of the Paper to National Security**. The paper will be pitched at the national strategic level, and aims to address a subject, which could throw up possible national policy options for India and Israel.

10. **Author’s Link to the Work**. An inherent advantage of being able to provide an Indian perspective.

11. **Person that Created the Work**. Original work by the author.

12. **Accompanying Instructor**. Ori Goldberg.