

---

## Iran and Canada Relations Main Obstacles and Bilateral Perspectives

---

Majid Bozorgmehri <sup>1\*</sup>, Sonaz Nasiri <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science, Imam Khomeini International University. Qazvin,  
Iran and Visitor Scholar, York University, Ontario, Canada

<sup>2</sup> Department of Political Science, Payam Nour University, Tehran, Iran

---

Received: 18 March 2018

;

Accepted: 20 Feb 2019

---

### Abstract:

Despite Iran's critical relations with USA since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Canada had often played the role of an honest broker and maintained relations with Iran, contrary to the US. Although the Canadian Government has not viewed the Iranian regime as democratic actor, it was interested in pursuing diplomacy for moderating the Iranian Policies too. Iran and Canada relations have passed the numerous ups and downs in the diplomatic, political and economic affairs. As our major question, this study aims at investigating the main factors, which affect the structure of bilateral relations. Canada has controlled engagement policy limits talks with Iran down to four main subjects: Iran's human rights situation, its regional role, notably towards Israel and the Middle East Peace Process, its nuclear program and an unfair accusation claiming a supportive role for Iran in world terrorism. Insisting on the principles of its foreign policy with its own reasonable justifications, Iran has tried to test various ways for conserving some levels of cooperation particularity economic and for keeping so the limited links with North America. Relying on discourse analysis, the article tries to elaborate the related issues by looking at the perspectives of both parties.

**Keywords:** Iran, Canada, North America, Middle East, International Security

### Introduction

The heartland of the ancient civilization of Persia, Iran is a resource-rich country at the cross-roads of Eurasia. Poised between the Persian Gulf in the south and the Caspian Sea in the north, Iran is home to a diverse population of almost 80,000,000 people.

Enjoying an outstanding regional role in the Middle East, Iran is constantly a secure producer of petroleum energy. Canada is usually considered as a relative im partial country in North America for Iran as well as an alternative power when facing

---

\*Corresponding Author's Email: bozorgmehri@soc.ikiu.ac.ir

the USA hostilities.

Despite Iran's critical relations with USA since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Canada had often played the role of an honest broker and maintained relations with Iran, contrary to the US. Although the Canadian Government has not viewed the Islamic Regime in Iran as democratic actor, it was interested in pursuing diplomacy for moderating the Iranian Policies too.

Iran and Canada relations have passed the numerous ups and downs in the diplomatic, political and economic affairs. As our major question, this study aims at investigating the main factors, which affect the structure of bilateral relations.

Canada has controlled engagement policy limits talks with Iran down to four main subjects: Iran's human rights situation, its regional role, notably towards Israel and the Middle East Peace Process, its nuclear program and an unfair accusation claiming a supportive role for Iran in world terrorism.

Insisting on the principles of its foreign policy with its own reasonable justifications, Iran has tried to test various ways for conserving some levels of cooperation particularly economic and keeping so the limited links with North America. Canada has also been an appropriate destination for the Iranian immigrants who were and are in majority, high level educated.

Relaying on discourse analysis, the article tries to elaborate the related issues by looking at the perspectives of both parties.

Finally, an optimistic discourse is opened according to the Iranian perspective.

### **Previous literature**

Under the shadow of great number of studies covering the Iran's relations with the west in general and with U.S.A in North America, we obviously suffer from the lack of sources

and previous works discussing the Iran-Canada relations. There are a few works, which have tried to describe or analyze the topic.

De Kerckhove through his interesting review entitled "Canada and Iran: Looking beyond the Present" in 2012 has tried to illustrate a good and comprehensive review of bilateral relations. De Kerckhove believes in three topics which must be highlighted in any effort for improvement of bilateral relations. He states "Despite feeble diplomatic attempts over time, three fundamental differences would soon mar any hopes of improvements: Iran's appalling human rights abuses, its antinomy positions on Israel and the Middle East Peace, and the nuclear non-proliferation debate.(De Kerckhove. 2012) He had an enough delicacy on the matter but he has seen the question more with a Canadian interpretation rather than an impartial judgment.

Malcolm by his negative look and skepticism believes in Iran's covert activities in Canada. For him, Canada, much like the United States, has long been a target of Iran's covert foreign operations. He claims that Iran has a well documented history of using Canada as a launching pad for its global fundraising and money-laundering operations, and has been caught openly calling for the infiltration of Canada's governing institutions and civil society. (Malcolm. 2017)

Contrary to Malcolm, Nesbitt speaks about a likely reestablishment of relations between two countries and tries to find the ways to reduce or remove the obstacles.(Nesbitt.2012)

The Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Canada prepared a report. The report has identified three critical themes -- Iran's nuclear activities, human rights in Iran, and regional

dynamics – and suggests that these form the focus of Canada’s foreign policy towards Iran and the region moving forward.

Although the report has a negative pre-judgment and discusses more or less the Iranian policies with unilateral interpretation, but it tries to propose some new perspectives for more and better cooperation in future. (Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.2012)

With his interesting paper “Political and legal issues between Iran and Canada, Finding paths for passing the obstacles” Islami has tried to analyze the issue somewhat impartially. By pointing out to the two approaches of Ottawa in its history of relations with USA and Great Britain “alliance” and “bandwagoning”, as Islami names them, he claims that the Canadian policy vis-à-vis Iran has been shaped under the shadow of these two attitudes. He believes that the economic and cultural as well as academic ties would create better the bases of cooperation in future. (Islami. 2007)

Through one of its reports, Borden Ladner Gervais publication speaks about softening sanctions against Iran: A Canadian perspective. The short report explains the legal obstacles for promoting the economic trade with Iran after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Relying on the report, at present, Canada has imposed economic sanctions against Iran under both the United Nations Act (UN Act) and the Special Economic Measures Act (SEMA). Economic sanctions imposed under SEMA are much more intrusive on Canadian-Iran trade than those imposed under the UN Act. (BLG. 2016)

By describing the Canadian approach against political terrorism, Mussa Zadeh claims that Canada has accused unduly Iran as supporter of terrorism. For him, this accusation is only a pretext hiding the close rela-

tions between Ottawa and Tel Aviv. Canada neglects willingly other acts of terrorism in the world, Mussa Zadeh writes. He emphasizes that Iran is itself a victim of terrorism. (Mussa Zadeh, 2017)

Nour Alivand speaks about the different approaches of conservative and liberal governments regarding to Iran. But he believes in general that the Canadian foreign policy at least in the Middle East is affected by USA policy. He recommends Tehran keeping relations with Ottawa.(Nour Alivand.2016)

All these works deserve surely a great consideration but they are mostly prepared on base of the unilateral comment and interpretation. Most of them try to see the issue from a Canadian perspective. Iran has like any other country in the International platform, his own attitudes and its reasonable comments. So here, by a bilateral as well as impartial vision, we try to dig deeper the issue.

## **Data & analysis**

### **Brief history of relations**

Before Revolution 1979, on the bilateral level, political contact between Canada and Iran throughout the mid-1950s was minimal. Commercial ties were also modest during this period. When Ottawa did weigh in on Iranian matters, it was frequently due to an intersection with British interests there.

Following the exchange of ambassadors in 1961, the commercial relationship grew steadily but also slowly and one-sidedly. Petroleum was the main Iranian export to Canada. Between 1961 and 1972 Canada received 241 million barrels of oil from the Iran. By 1970, these petroleum imports were valued at nearly \$34 million annually. However, during the same period, Canada exported only about \$8 million in goods to Iran each year. (Bookmiller. 2009. Canada and Iran’ (1971)

Department of External Affairs Monthly Report 23, no.10 (1971))

Hence, Tehran enjoyed a healthy trade surplus in its dealings with Ottawa during this stage of the bilateral commercial relationship.

In many respects, 1971 was a turning point for Canadian-Iranian bilateral ties. At that time, the Trudeau government was seeking new trade relationships in a bid to break Canada's heavy reliance on the US as its principal trading partner and the inherent vulnerability that this reliance placed on Canada's economy.

#### **After Iranian revolution**

In 1980 Canadian embassy at Tehran helped US diplomats escape Iran and the embassy was closed. (Iran Canada Business Council. 2018)

Canada and Iran did not retain normal relations from 1980 to 1988, though relations were not formally severed. It was only in 1988 that Canada and Iran agreed to resume diplomatic relations and the Canadian Embassy in Tehran was re-opened. It was only in 1996 that both nations formally exchanged ambassadors. Canadian concerns over human rights abuses in Iran, its record on nuclear non-proliferation, and its opposition to the Middle East peace process have led to a policy of 'controlled engagement' by Canadian diplomats when dealing with Iran, such as limiting the range of conversation and restricting bilateral ties; for instance, preventing the establishment of direct air links between both countries or the opening of Iranian consulates and cultural centers elsewhere in Canada other than the main embassy.

No formal relationship until 1988 but throughout the 1990s, commercial relations expanded rapidly and so Iran became one of

Canada's most important trading partners in the middle East region. (Arvin. 2017)

The suspicious death of Iranian-Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi in 2003, which died while detained in Tehran's Evin prison, resulted in the downgrading of relations. (Arvin.2017)

Some great difficult economic relationships happened in 2010 and in September 2012, then Canada has decided to close its embassy at Tehran. Canadian government enacted a sanction regime governed by the Special Economic Measures Act (SEMA) and the Special Economic Measures (Iran) Regulations in 2012, which imposed many restrictions trade with Iran, including import of sensitive goods and technology from Canada and nuclear and missiles development.

But in July 14, 2015, UN Security Council in cooperation with 5+1 came to an agreement with Iran which was passed as UN Security Council Resolution 223. In 2016, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that Iran has fulfilled all necessary commitments under JCPOA. Canada announced willingness to resume discussions with Iran- possibility of restoring diplomatic contact.(ICBC. 2018)

#### **Major Challenges**

##### **Priorities of both parties Canada**

In order to understand and analyze foreign policy, it is very necessary to concentrate on the tangible actions that governments undertake. (Marandi. 2016)

Canada has a controlled engagement policy for talks with Iran down to four subjects: Iran's human rights situation, Iran's nuclear program and its lack of respect for its non-proliferation obligations, the case of Zahra Kazemi, Iran's role in the region. (Kerckhove.2012: 1) and its policy against Israel.

Standing Senate Committee's findings indicate three critical themes that merit continued attention from the Government of Canada: Iran's nuclear activities, its human rights record, and unstable regional dynamics. As events in Iran and the region continue to unfold, these three themes are central to Canada's ongoing foreign policy towards Iran. Each theme holds its own particular relevance for Canadian interests.

Arvin believes in that the Canadian authorities who follow the file, do not trust enough the Iranian regime, not just because of its possible nuclear plans, but also because of its claimed support for terrorist groups, its actions in support of Assad in Syria, its ballistic missiles program, its active electronic army, its regional meddling, and generally its internal policies and domestic human rights measures. (Arvin. 2017) Iran.

The foreign policy behavior and strategic goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran are based on principles which must be accurately scrutinized for their correct understanding. Countries such as Iran have unique characteristics in terms of their strategic position. (Mossalanejad.2019)

Despite popular belief, Iran's foreign policy is not exclusively shaped within the context of the Islamic discourse and ideology. There are three other discourses, namely Iranian nationalism, the revolutionary discourse, and Third-Worldism, all of which play a pivotal role in defining the strategic pillars of Iran's foreign policy.

Relying on its mentioned four discourses, Iran figures its indent as below:

1. It is Islamic, revolutionary and Iranian
2. It is a developing country
3. It is a regional power
4. It is located in an unstable region

5. It is threatened by extra-regional existential threats

6. It is strategically lonely

So the most important general principles that determine Iran's foreign policy behavior include its:

1. Anti-arrogance policies
2. Anti-oppression policies
3. Negation of domination
4. Support for the oppressed people and liberation movements
5. Support and defense of Islam and Muslims across the world
6. Peaceful coexistence
7. Anti-colonialism
8. Mutual respect
9. Commitment to and compliance with international obligations, treaties and laws.

Strategic ideals of Iranian foreign policy take their roots from the dominant political culture and geopolitical environment. These Ideals do not prevent some pragmatisms and compromise policies in the Iranian approach. (Motaghi.2018)

For Iran, there is not any definitive proof indicating or proving the Iranian support for the real terrorist groups in the world. Iran does not look the Hezbollah as a terrorist group. Iran claims that real and main aggressor or destabilizer in the region is Israel, not Iran. Its nuclear program is pacific and the ballistic missiles have just preventive and defensive character.(Dehghani Firoozabadi. 2017)

Iran believes that Hezbollah is a liberation movement, using force to legitimately resist Israeli occupation. It has evolved into a political party, as well, which has won some elections in Lebanon. (Bahgat.2008)

The Islamic Republic, however, denies any involvement in terrorist activities and, it conversely claims that it has been a victim of terrorism. (Katzman.2015) Confrontation

with terrorist groups and management of regional crisis is a section of Iran's foreign policy. (Poostinchi, 2017)

Iran's regional influence, issue of Israel's security and US Policy

As summarized it Masaeli through her general review, the securitization of Iran by Canadian government, was framed around three key threats: the threat to Israel; the threat to the people of Iran, which was mainly claimed as violations of rights and freedoms; and most significantly, the threat to international peace and security, which included Iran's nuclear ambitions and support of terrorist organizations. (Masaeli.2016)

Speaking about the Iran's regional role leads us towards a major question. Is it the expression of a power struggle between the Sunni-dominated Arab states led by Saudi Arabia vs. Iran and its allies, including Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah, or could it be simply the size, geostrategic position and resources of Iran that are at the heart of its influence? Most likely both. The Shia-Sunni dimension plays a growing and critical role at a time when Islamist governments and movements are holding more sway than ever before.

As Nesbit pointed out the Zionist lobbies and negative approach of conservatives in Canada has affected the Canadian policy against Iran. (Nesbitt.2016)

Canada has oriented his policy towards Iran, relying on the accusations projected by Iran's adversaries. Therefore, it is shaped a strong belief that the Iranian regime is a destabilizing force in the region and a threat to international peace and stability. In addition, the tensions between Iran and Israel as one of the main concerns facing the region. In this context, Iran's nuclear policies present an existential threat to Israel, leading Israel to threaten to pre-emptively strike Iran's nuclear facilities. (Standing Senate Committee.2012)

In 2005, Prime Minister Martin did not take kindly to ex-President Ahmadinejad's infamous October 2005 comments on Israel, and he gave a formal reprimand to Iran's top diplomat in Canada while telling the press: "that kind of lack of respect, intolerance, anti-Semitism – this is the 21st century and that statement is just out of an era that is long past and never should have occurred." (Kerckhove. 2012)

Prime Minister Harper, for his part, having enshrined a decidedly more pro-Israel policy, expressed clearly his distaste for Iran's denial of the Holocaust. (Shari- fiyan.2009)

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, a Canadian Jewish advocacy, claims that genocidal calls for the destruction of Israel from Tehran should be taken very serious. (The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.2016)

Anthony James Hall reported that since Stephen Harper delivered his notorious speech to the Israeli Knesset in early 2014, the government of Canada has outdone the government of the United States in subordinating its national interest to the political agenda of Likudnik-dominated Israel. (Hall.2015)

Following the Axis of Evil speech delivered by George Bush, President of USA, inflammatory characterization of Iran in the Axis of Evil is embedded in Canadian foreign policy once the Conservative Party of Prime Minister Stephen Harper achieved a majority government in 2011.(Hall. 2016)

From the day he took office, Stephen Harper made relations with Israel a significant international policy priority. Prioritizing Israel was therefore all but inevitable, regardless of the Conservatives' strength in the House (Chapnick. 2016)

Terrorism and false accusation to Iran as violator of International Peace and Security.

On September 7, 2012, Canada designated Iran as a state supporter of terrorism. Pursuant to the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, and related amendments to the State Immunity Act, Canada has revoked Iran's state immunity in relation to any actions brought against Iran in connection with its support of terrorism. Since that time, diplomatic relations between Canada and Iran have been suspended. (Borden Ladner Gervais LLP.2016)

The readings of Senate Bill S-219 "An Act to Deter Iran sponsored terrorism," which passed, has imposed some of the most restrictive sanctions on Iran, and potentially stall the prospect of re-establishing diplomatic relations with Iran. (Arvin.2017)

Canadian sanctions are governed by umbrella legislation, the Special Economic Measures Act, SC 1992, c 17 (SEMA). In relevant part, section 4(1) of the SEMA states: "The Governor in Council may, for the purpose of implementing a decision, resolution or recommendation of an international organization of states or association of states, of which Canada is a member, that calls on its members to take economic measures against a foreign state, or where the Governor in Council is of the opinion that a grave breach of international peace and security has occurred that has resulted or is likely to result in a serious international crisis," (Nesbitt. 2016)

On 7 September 2012 Canada shuttered its Embassy in Iran, "PNG'd" Iranian diplomats (the colloquial diplomatic term used to say that they were issued "persona non grata" papers and required to leave the country), and listed Iran as a state sponsor of terror under the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, SC 2012, c 1.

Under Canada's Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46, both the al-Qods Force and

Hezbollah are listed terrorist entities. Hezbollah has been responsible for attacks in Lebanon and Israel and, most recently, egregious violations in support of the Assad regime in Syria. More to the point, the Qods force is not just supported by Iran; it is an elite part of the Iranian regime itself. (Nesbitt. 2016)

### **Iran's Nuclear Program**

Iran's nuclear capabilities have been the subject of global hand wringing for more than two decades. While Iran's leaders long insisted the country was not building nuclear weapons, its enrichment of uranium created unfairly some mistrust. After more than two years of negotiations and threats to bomb the country's facilities, Iran and world powers agreed in 2015 to settle the dispute. The deal set limits on the Islamic Republic's nuclear work in exchange for relief from economic sanctions that crimped oil exports and hobbled its economy. (Tirone. 2018)

After several rounds of negotiations, on 24 November 2013, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an interim agreement on the Iranian nuclear program, was signed between Iran and the P5+1 country in Geneva, Switzerland. JCPOA tops the list of Iran's foreign policy priorities. Iran aims to guarantee the full implementation of the JCPOA by all the signatories to the deal. The main goal of the agreement was to lift economic sanctions imposed on Iran over its nuclear program so that the economic benefits of the deal would allow Iran to pursue all-out economic progress and development. Therefore, Iran has announced that it will remain committed to the JCPOA as long as this primary goal is met and all other parties remain committed to it. Otherwise, it would not be in Iran's interests to remain in the nuclear deal. All political factions in Iran are unanimous in this regard. The main bone

of contention and disagreements here are about the violations of the JCPOA by the United States, the degree to which Iran has benefited by it, the preservation of the JCPOA after US withdrawal.

So it is proven that Iran is committed to JCPOA based on the frequent and official reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Therefore, Iran has a logic expectation from the Europe and Canada to remove the sanctions relating to its previous peaceful atomic energy.

False accusations charging the Iranian regime for conspiracy in Canada

There is the claim or better to say the false accusation relating to Iran's activities in Canada centered on its proxy group, Hezbollah. Relying on it, Canadian territory has been an important source of financing for the Iranian-backed Lebanese Shi'ite militia.

The case of Mohammad Hassan Dbouk is one the accusations on the organization's stronghold in Canada. After arriving in Vancouver and seeking refugee status in Canada in 1998, Dbouk established a major fundraising and procurement network in Canada under the command of Haj Hassan Hilu Laqis, then-chief military procurement officer of Hezbollah. (Malcolm.2017)

Apart from Hezbollah, it is also falsely claimed that the Iranian regime had its own direct reach into Canada vis-à-vis its embassy in Ottawa. Prior to the 2012 closing of the Iranian Embassy in Ottawa, sources believed that the Islamic Republic was using its embassy to build a network of sympathizers and allies. Among its activities, for instance, the Islamic Republic's embassy worked with the local public school board in Ottawa to develop courses on Iranian culture and language. (Assadollahi. 2016). But it is not deniable that these kinds of cultural activities cannot be assumed as conspiracy.

Targeting second-generation Canadian children of Iranian origin, one course used textbooks that included Islamic Republic ideas and images that glorified child soldiers, suicide bombers and martyrdom, as well as prominent and complementary photographs of Ayatollah Khomeini. (Assadollahi. 2016)

Diplomatic spat over representation in each other's capital.

Iran ordered Ambassador Mundy to leave the country in early December 2007. Mundy, who was never allowed by the IRI to formally present his credentials despite being publicly named ambassador in April, was expelled in retaliation for Ottawa rejecting at least two individuals Tehran had put forth as its representative. Iran had not had an ambassador in Canada since 2004. The embassy was headed at the chargé d'affaires. (Bookmiller.2009)

According to published accounts, the Iranian diplomats had previously served as ambassadors to Germany and the former USSR. Canadian officials believed that both candidates had been involved with the US hostage crisis of 1979-81. (Bookmiller.2009)

As a consequence, Ottawa would not accept either man as Iran's envoy. (Freeman.2008) (Nour Alivand.2016)

Foreign Minister Bernier explained, "We believe that the expulsion of our ambassador is an unfortunate and unjustified consequence of this situation. As always, Canada remains prepared to receive an Iranian ambassador provided a suitable candidate is presented Bilateral Meltdown: Death of Canadian-Iranian citizens in Iranian prisons during the political custody.

### **The Zahra Kazemi death Case**

On June 23, 2003, Zahra Kazemi, a dual citizen, was arrested while taking illegally pictures of student protests in front of the notorious Evin prison in Tehran. She was see-



mingly beaten by accident and security authorities reluctantly admitted her into a hospital. Family members were notified of her condition and whereabouts a week later. Since Iran does not recognize subsequent citizenships, the Canadian Embassy was not informed. She had presented her Iranian passport on entry to Iran. The aim of her travel to Iran was to visit with her family in Shiraz, not working as a foreign journalist.

Indeed, consular officials only became aware of the situation when the Kazemi family contacted them requesting assistance on July 7. Over the next three days, embassy staff visited the hospital seeking information about her condition and the circumstances which led to her injuries. In Ottawa, Ambassador Mousavi was summoned to a meeting at DFAIT, where he was presented with a formal Canadian request for an investigation. Foreign Ministry officials also solicited the Ambassador's help in securing alternate medical treatment for Kazemi. However, her injuries were too extensive and she died on July 12.

By now, the highest levels of both governments were involved. Khatami, Iranian President announced an inquiry into her arrest and death. In Ottawa, from Chrétien on down, statements were issued demanding a transparent investigation. Graham called Kharrazi with this message and Manley stated publicly that the warming bilateral relationship would be jeopardized if her death was not satisfactorily explained. The two sides remained at loggerheads over numerous issues including the disposition of Kazemi's body. Tehran maintained that her family wished her be interred in Iran, while Ottawa insisted that her Montreal-based son wanted the remains repatriated back to Canada. Underlining the issue of burial was also having the opportunity to perform an independent autopsy to determine the cause of her death.

When Kazemi was buried in Shiraz on July 23, Chrétien recalled Ambassador Philip MacKinnon in protest. (Bookmiller.2009)

One of the first indications of this new policy was at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in November 2003. Canada sponsored a resolution condemning Iran's human rights record and directed the campaign for its passage. Although Ottawa denied its actions were spurred by the Kazemi case, the vigor in which it moved the resolution to a successful vote in committee left no doubt about the seriousness of its intentions..

As the controversy over Kazemi lingered, Tehran sought to interject the case of Keyvan Tabesh into the mix. Tabesh was an 18 year old Iranian immigrant who was shot and killed by British Columbia police on July 14, 2003. Tabesh was wielding a machete at officers prior to being killed. Kharrazi raised the issue directly with Graham on numerous occasions. (Bookmiller.2009)

In July 2004, as the trial for shortly thereafter Iran's judiciary issued a statement claiming her death was accidental "due to a fall in blood pressure resulting from a hunger strike and her fall on the ground while standing." DFAIT rejected the statement as lacking in any credibility.

As the trial ended, many Iranian officials failed to grasp the depth of Canadian anger over Kazemi's murder and the failed legal proceedings as well as how extensively the case was being covered by the media back in Canada. Indicative of this misread was a statement by an IRI Foreign Ministry spokesman. "The issue of Zahra Kazemi will not affect our relationship with Canada," asserted Hamid Reza Asefi, "because Zahra Kazemi was an Iranian citizen and this has nothing to do with Canada." (Bookmiller.2009) Suicide of sociology professor in prison

The healthy 64-year-old Kavous Seyed-Emami was a sociology professor and well-known environmentalist who ran the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation from Tehran. Well-liked among his colleagues and students, he had launched projects to track rare and endangered animals, such as the Persian leopard, while he conducted research on environmental issues.

But his work came to an end after he was arrested suddenly in January and charged of spying for Israel and the CIA. He was held for just a few weeks before he allegedly committed suicide in prison in early February. Officials in Iran report that he had confessed to his crimes prior to his death, adding that he was part of a conspiracy to collect classified information under the guise of "scientific and environmental projects."

Emami's foundation had set up cameras to track rare animals in the wilderness. The cameras, together with the foundation's communication with international experts, were used to fuel accusations that Emami and other employees were engaged in espionage. (MAZA.2018)

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland offered her condolences and stated that Canada expects "the Government of Iran to provide information and answers into the circumstances surrounding this tragedy." She welcomed the return of Seyed-Emami's sons back to Canada in March 2018 and asked the Government of Iran to lift the travel ban on Seyed-Emami's spouse, Maryam Mombeini. (Global Affairs Canada. 2018 a b)

Accusations charging Iran for supplying insurgent forces that caused the Canadian soldiers death in Afghanistan.

The new chill in the relationship was also evident in statements made by Defense Minister MacKay on a Christmas 2007 visit to

Canadian troops in Afghanistan. He accused Tehran of supplying insurgent forces with the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) responsible for many of the Canadian deaths in Afghanistan. This was the first time that such an accusation had been made publicly by a governmental minister. (Mackay. 2007)

### **Iranian perspective, an optimiste discours. Terrorism**

It is not deniable that Iran is fighting extremist terrorism; Iran is protecting vulnerable minorities; Iran is a needed counterweight to the corrupt Saudis; Iran best represents the aspirations of the Palestinians, whose plight still defines the core of the Middle East's problems; Iran's growing power guarantees a multipolar, and therefore safer, international system. Iran has been and is now victim of blind terrorism.

No need to say that to many, Hezbollah is a liberation movement, using force to legitimately resist Israeli occupation. It has evolved into a political party, as well, which has just won an election in Lebanon

Iran denies any involvement in terrorist activities and conversely claims that it has been a victim of it. Despite ex-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's inflammatory rhetoric regarding Israel, many Iranian officials and commentators believe that their country has no national interest conflict with the Jewish state. Many Iranians believe that Tehran has already paid a high price for its position with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. (Bahgat.2008)

Under the SEMA there must be a breach of international peace and security – wording that goes beyond a "threat" of a breach. Canada cannot designate Iranian persons or entities for threats to international peace and security, or for "mere" human rights abuses, or even for sponsorship of terrorism, unless it

would be found that they rise to the level of a breach of “international peace and security”.

But about sanctions, it should be notified that they are in general ineffective instruments to pressure a change in behavior of the target regime because “the real pain of sanctions is rarely felt by the government. Instead of the government feeling the pinch, it passes it on to the citizens.

The negative impact of sanctions weighs seriously on the Iranian people. Economic sanctions, are a kind of lose-lose situation for the people and their quest for democracy and human rights. If the sanctions actually do not work, then their failure would justify war for those who advocate war and war is a losing situation for the people. If sanctions work, it is again a lose situation because they will have punished the people; they will have weakened the middle class, which is driving for democracy and they will have intensified corruption, smuggling, and the shadow economy.

The Canadian government takes no notice whatsoever of the fact the Iranian Armed Forces are actively engaged in fighting the strange militarized monstrosity named wrongly and mischievously the Islamic State.

A related set of questions asks why the Canadian government is treating Iran as the most significant threat to global peace and security in the world today when Iran is opposing the exploits of the so-called Islamic State, the non-state.

### **Nuclear Program**

Not neglect issue of nuclear program. After several rounds of negotiations, on 24 November 2013, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an interim agreement on the Iranian nuclear program, was signed between Iran and the P5+1 country in Geneva, Switzerland. JCPOA tops the list of Iran’s foreign policy priorities. Iran aims to guaran-

tee the full implementation of the JCPOA by all the signatories to the deal. The main goal of the agreement was to lift economic sanctions imposed on Iran over its nuclear program so that the economic benefits of the deal would allow Iran to pursue all-out economic progress and development. Therefore, Iran has announced that it will remain committed to the JCPOA as long as this primary goal is met and all other parties remain committed to it.

So it is proven that Iran is committed to JCPOA based on the frequent and official reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Therefore, Iran has a logic expectation from the Europe and Canada to remove the sanctions relating to its previous peaceful atomic energy.

Many countries including Canada have nuclear energy programs. The question of how best to produce energy for various industrial purposes is of course one of the most pressing and controversial global issues of our time.

It should be admitted that, however, why it has become an important point of principle and pride within Iran that it has the same legal right as every other country to produce nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The Iranian government stands accused of stealth in misrepresenting the true nature of its nuclear program. Such accusations would better be directed at the nuclear superpowers including the United States, Russia, China, France, and Israel. Together and individually these states possess huge arsenals of weapons of mass destruction and are pursuing many secret avenues to create new technologies of nuclearized mass murder.

Canada’s close relations with USA. When speak about Canada’s policies relating to Iran, we should not neglect the close relations between USA and Canada. Canadian and

American's solidarity has been seriously emerged by close military allies in World War II, a partnership that was deepened and institutionalized during the Cold War years of the 1950s. Joined at the hip by geography, history, and economics, relations between the two nations were marked by quiet diplomacy that was founded on close personal contacts and shared understandings.

Canada is partly a follower of USA foreign Policy in the Middle East issues, including Iran. As Allan Gotlieb states over the past 60 years, Canada's strategies on the international plane have largely been driven by the concerns about the relationship with the United States. In the drama of Canada's foreign policy, the U.S. is always the principal actor; at the table where Canadians prepare the ingredients of their foreign policy, the U.S. is always the principal guest; when Canadians assemble to discuss their needs and destiny, the spectra of the U.S. is always there to dominate their thoughts. (Gotlieb.2013)

Therefore, the shadow of USA policies is bold and significant on the Canadian foreign policy concerning Middle East, particularly Iran.

As Ferry de Kerckhove remarks, the West see the Iranian regime through some Western prism and hope for an uprising. But the West must try to better understand – not accept – the rationalities underlying Iran's behavior rather than creating its rationalities. Engagement, under strict conditions, including the recognition of a mutual interest in changed relationships, might better lead to long term stability. Negotiations must be conducted on an equal footing, irrespective of the profound dislike for the regime at the helm of the country. This entails for Canada to take specific measures. (De Kerckhove. 2012)

Anthony James Hall looks the issue so. Based on his view, the Harper government's characterization of both the domestic condition and the international orientation of Iran in 2012 were and is now grossly inaccurate. Canadian foreign policy towards Iran is ill considered and inconsistent with Canada's genuine national interests, but especially its economic, cultural and geopolitical interests.

James Hall believes in that as long as the Canadian government continues as a protagonist in this economic warfare, many Canadian enterprises that are anxious to conduct business with their Iranian counterparts will continue to be hampered.

Government interventions in the imperatives of free trade will continue to deprive Canadian companies of a secure legal framework to interact commercially with a relatively stable, resource rich and technologically sophisticated country, one whose well educated population includes a very high proportion of university-educated women. (James Hall. 2015)

Hall claims that since 2012 the policy of the Canadian government towards Iran is pretty much based on Prime Minister Netanyahu's articulation of Israel's orientation to Iran. As in so many fields of Canadian foreign policy, the Harper government's position on Iran extends the policies of Likudnik dominated Israel. The underlying understanding on which these policies are based is that the Islamic structure of Iran's Shia constitution must be overturned by encouraging, fomenting and assisting dissidence from within.

The determination of Canadian federal government to take sides in the monumental geopolitical rift developing between the Jewish state of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran puts Canada dramatically out of line with the current position of the US executive branch. Indeed, the alignment of the

Canadian government with the position of the US Republican Party

Senators that have sided with Benjamin Netanyahu to undermine the power of the US presidency have huge implications for Canada's position in the world.

In the process the idealism attached to the vision of Canada as a land of justice, fairness, compromise, multiculturalism and reconciliation on the middle ground has been downgraded. In the place of this idealism there has emerged a triumphalist coalition who's most strident voices call for victory over the much-hyped and politically manipulated Muslim enemy. David Frum is one of those voices. The co-author of an Islamophobic instructional manual on How to Win the War on Terror and thereby put An End to Evil, he gives a Canadian twist to the convergence of many historical forces in George Bush's infamous Axis of Evil speech.

### Promoting commercial and economic Cooperation

One important priority of Iran is to bolster a

comprehensive economic diplomacy in order to facilitate the economic development of the country. To this end, Iran is endeavoring to expand its economic relations with other countries and in North America with Canada. The argument offered by the Rouhani government is that Iran's national economy has so far been at the service of the country's foreign policy; but the time has come for foreign policy to serve and help the economic development of the country. Similarly, Iran's Supreme Leader has also set economic developments as one of the main objectives of the country, to be pursued by the government at home and abroad.

Canadian businesses would be at a distinct disadvantage if they were left unable to engage with Iran while their competitors were free to negotiate. A good example is the Canadian company Bombardier, surely tempted by Iran's needs in the airplane and train industries. (Nesbitt.2016)

Here it is the table showing the bilateral exports between 2006-2015.

**Table 1.**

*Bilateral Exports between 2006-2015 (Nour Alivand.2016)*

| Year                    | 2015 | 2012 | 2010 | 2009    | 2008    | 2007    | 2006                     |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------------|
| Canada's Export to Iran | 40   | 95   | 115  | 373.005 | 638.687 | 254.689 | 272.246<br>Million US \$ |
| Iran's Export to Canada | 5    | 40   | 37   | 21.686  | 37.389  | 41.683  | 39.238                   |

The tables indicates that during 2015-2017 when there was a bilateral will for reducing the obstacles, the path was opened

for the significant increase in trade exchange. (Statistics/Industry Canada.2018)

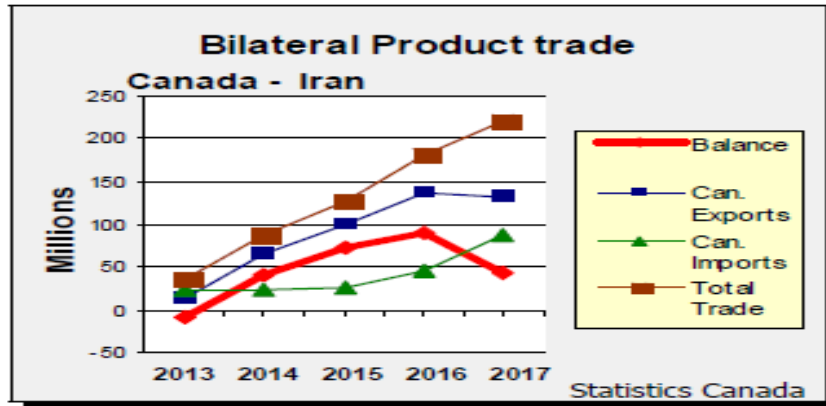


Fig 1. Bilateral trade between two countries (Statistics/Industry Canada.2018)

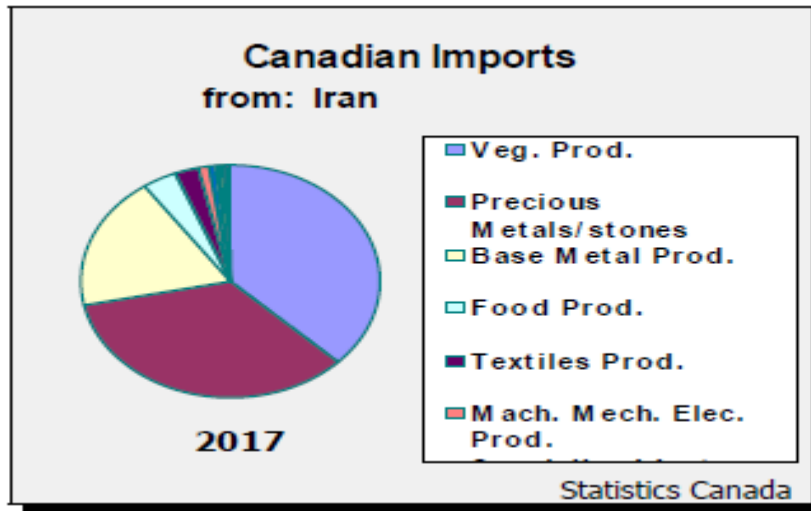


Fig 2. Canadian Imports from Iran in 2017(Statistics/Industry Canada.2018)  
(Statistics/Industry Canada.2018)

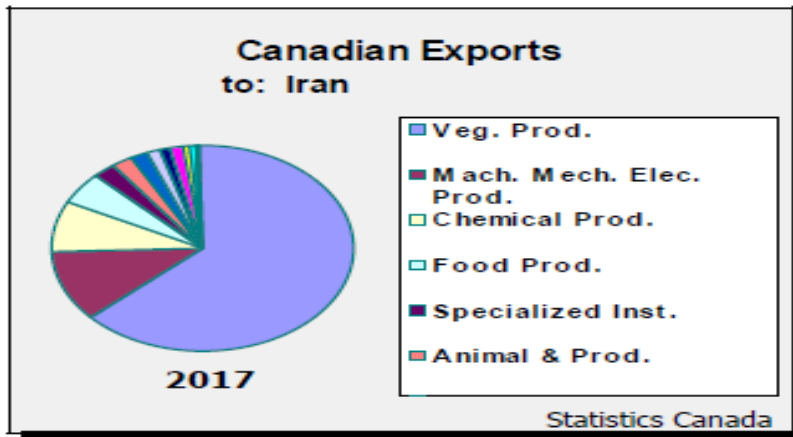


Fig 4: Canadian Exports to Iran in 2017(Statistics/Industry Canada.2018)

Through these statistics, a great potentiality for increasing the bilateral trade is exposed.

### **Conclusion**

Contrary to mutual disagreements which had full of ups and downs, there are no legal and deep obstacles to re-establishing relations with Iran that cannot be overcome, though the designation of Iran as a state sponsor of terror certainly made optimistic probabilities politically very difficult.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran is now over 40 years old. Over these decades the Islamic Revolution has created the basis of a fairly stable and well-organized society with considerable gains and takes among a pluralistic array of distinct communities and constituencies.

There are some serious critics regarding the Iranian policies argued by the Iranian elites. A number of Iranian elites suppose that the main problem of Iranian Identity is now its ideological feature which could be abused by the political regimes. (Haidari, 2014) But we should not exaggerate about the problems and challenges.

Two countries can establish the bases for commercial and economic cooperation.

Of course Iran is not perfect. No country

is. Some human rights violations have taken place in the Islamic Republic. One of them concerns the death of a Zahra Kazemi, a Canadian citizen that met her death in an Iranian prison in 2003.

Unfortunately human right violations take place in all countries including Canada. The federal government's refusal to investigate the disappearance and murder of an obscene number of Aboriginal women is an example of human right violations in Canada. Many Aboriginal boys and men are also subject to all manner of abuses aimed at First Nations by the neoconservatives who are no more respectful of Aboriginal rights and titles in Canada than they are of the fundamental human rights of the still stateless Palestinian people.

As my final concluding remark, there should be a more strong willingness between two parties for improvement of relations. Ottawa must try to be more independent in its policies towards Iran. Tehran must try to be more trustable and transparent in its regional policies too.

### **Acknowledgment**

Here I should declare my deep gratitude from department of Politics in York University, Ontario, Canada, for providing me this good opportunity to accomplish this research.

## References

- Arvin, Luciano.(2017) Canada's Relations With Iran Are At A Historic Crossroads, THE BLOG 10/11/2017 00:44 EDT | Updated 10/11/2017 15:41 EDT Luciano Arvin, Independent researcher from Peterborough, Ont. Writes about foreign relations, [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/luciano-arvin/canadas-relations-with-iran-are-at-a-historic-crossroads\\_a\\_23235574/](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/luciano-arvin/canadas-relations-with-iran-are-at-a-historic-crossroads_a_23235574/)
- Assadollahi, Shabnam and David Harris, (2016) "Keep Iran at arm's length", National Post, August 22, 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/keep-iran-at-arms-length>
- BAHGAT, GAWDAT (2009) United States-Iranian Relations: The Terrorism Challenge. Winter 2008-0, © Gawdat Bahgat 2009
- Bookmiller, Robert J.(2009) Engaging Iran Australian and Canadian Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran , Persian Gulf Research Center. Dubai, United Arab Emirates, First published 2009. ISBN: 9948-434-66-8
- Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (2016) Softening Sanctions Against Iran: A Canadian Perspective Wednesday, January 27, 2016-2017. blg.com
- CBC (2007),"MacKay Says Iran Giving Weapons to Taliban," December 25, 2007, found at <http://www.cbc.ca>. (December 26, 2007).
- Chapnick, Adam and Christopher J. Kukucha 2016 ."Stephen Harper's Israel Policy" The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy. Parliament, Politics and Canada Global Posture, UBC Press 2016
- CTV, (.2007),"Canadian Ambassador to Iran Expelled: Bernier," CTV, December 3, 2007, found at <http://www.ctv.ca>, (December 4, 2007).
- De Kerckhove. Ferry, (2012) "Canada and Iran: Looking Beyond the Present". CDFAI Research Fellow, September, 2012. Prepared for the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 1600, 530 – 8th Avenue S.W., Calgary, AB T2P 3S8, [www.cdfai.org](http://www.cdfai.org), ©2012 Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, ISBN: 978-1-927573-01-3
- Dehghani Firoozabadi. Seyyed Jalal (2017) "Iran's Foreign Policy Principles and Priorities"
- Freeman Alan,(2007) "Tehran Defends Choice of Ambassadors," Globe and Mail, December, 2007, A13, found at Lexis-Nexis (accessed April 19, 2008
- Global Affairs Canada a (2018)"Canada calls for safe return to Canada of Kavous Seyed-Emami's widow, Maryam Mombeini" (Press release, March 8, 2018)
- Global Affairs Canada b (2018)"Canada calls on Iranian authorities to let Maryam Mombeini return to Canada" (Press release). March 19, 2018.
- Gotlieb, Allan, (2013) "The United States in Canadian Foreign Policy, "Global Affairs Canada, 2013, Site of Government of Canada" <https://www.international.gc.ca/odskelton/gotlieb.aspx?lang=eng>
- Heidari, Gholam Hossien and Zohreh Haidarbini.(2014) " Study on Challenges of National Power in Iran with emphasis on National Identity Crisis" Geopolitics Quarterly, Spring 2014. Pp.82-60. in Persian
- Hall, Anthony James.(2015) "On the Need to Re-Establish Sensible Diplomatic Relations Between Canada and the



- Islamic Republic of Iran. University of Lethbridge presentation at the Southern Alberta Council on Public Affairs, 26 March, 2015  
<http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran-s-Foreign-Policy-Principles-and-Priorities.htm>, November 12, 2017
- [http://www.thefullwiki.org/Canada-Iran\\_relations](http://www.thefullwiki.org/Canada-Iran_relations) Encyclopedia (Redirected to Canada–Iran relations )  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/quicktake/irans-uranium-enrichment>  
[https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/ci-ci/assets/pdfs/fact\\_sheet-fiche\\_documentaire/iran-FS-en.pdf](https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/ci-ci/assets/pdfs/fact_sheet-fiche_documentaire/iran-FS-en.pdf)
- Iran Canada Business Council (2018) Iran Canada, Business Relations between Canada and Iran, February, 14. 2018. Montreal, ICBC.
- Islami, Massoud (2007), “Political and legal issues between Iran and Canada, Finding paths for passing the obstacles” *Journal of Foreign Relations, Iran*
- Katzman, Kenneth (2015) Iran’s Foreign Policy, [kkatzman@crs.loc.gov](mailto:kkatzman@crs.loc.gov), 7-7612, November 25, 2015 Congressional Research Service 7-5700, [www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov), R44017
- Ladner, Borden. (2016) “Softening Sanctions against Iran: A Canadian Perspective” Gervais publication, (BLG) Wednesday, January 27, 2016
- Malcolm. Candice. (2017), “Checking Iran’s Gambit, A Review of Canada’s Policy, toward the Islamic Republic” Issue 4 • May 2017, Center for a Secure Free Society, Global Dispatch, <http://www.torontosun.com/2017/03/10/the-liberal-narrative-is-in-denial-about-iran>
- Marandi, Mohammad and Mehrdad Halakhor, (2016), “America and Securitization of Iran after the Islamic revolution 1979 till 2013; continuation or change” *Geopolitics Quarterly*, Volume: 11, No 4, Winter 2016 PP 85-116
- Masaeli, Soha, (2016), “The Harper Administration’s Securitization of Iran”, Major Research Paper. 5621801. July 1, 2016
- Mossalanejad, Abbas, (2019) “US Comparative Policy toward Iran and the Middle East Security” *Geopolitics Quarterly*, Volume: 14, No 4, winter, 2019 PP 1-20
- Mottaghi, Ebrahim and Amir Reza Ahmadi Khoei, Seyed Amir Niakoui. (2018), “Strategic Ideals and tactical pragmatism in Iranian Foreign Policy in Middle East”, *Geopolitics Quarterly*, Volume 14, spring 2018, Pp.82-112, in Persian
- Mussa Zadeh and Mahmoud Bakhsh Ganj, (2017) “Canadian Government and political terrorism, Case of Study, Iran-Canada relations” *Dolat Pajouhi Journal*, Faculty of Law and political sciences. Tehran University, Iran.
- Nesbitt, Michael. (2016), *Canada-Iran Relations: Sanctions, Diplomatic Relations and the Law*, January 22, 2016 the University of Calgary Faculty of Law Blog
- Nour Alivand, Yasser (2016), “Iran-Canada Relations and its Future Perspective” *Tahlil (analysis)*
- Poostinchi, Zohreh, (2017), “Rebalancing of Iran’s Regional Role in U.S Policy” *Geopolitics Quarterly*, Volume: 12, No 4, Winter 2017 PP 123-145
- Sharifiyan, Ali, (2009), Ups and downs in Iran Canada relations through the history. Some words in occasion of severe repression of protestant crowd who accuse the false result of elec-

- tion 2009. Profile of Week, July 2009. Canada.
- Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, (2012), "Iran in Focus: Current Issues for Canadian Foreign Policy" December 2012, [www.senate-senat.ca/foraffetrang.asp](http://www.senate-senat.ca/foraffetrang.asp)
- Statistics/Industry Canada, 2018 <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/tdo-dcd.nsf/eng/Home> IMF <http://www.imf.org/external/ns/cs.aspx?id=28>
- The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, (2016), Priorities Canadian, Jewish, Advocacy
- Tirone, Jonathan, (2018), "Iran's Nuclear Program" Bloomberg, Quicktake