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**120 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
BETWEEN
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN AND ROMANIA**



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Millennial Interactions between the Nations of Iran and Romania

Dr. Alibeman Eghbali ZARCH¹

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

Iran and Romania have enjoyed a long-standing and cordial relationship, dating all the way back to their connections thousands of years ago. Two eminent Iranian scholars, historian and chronicler Rashid al-Din and geographer Gardizi, provided significant information about the Romanian people who lived in the north and south of the Danube in the 11th to the 13th century. Researchers and orientalist from Iran and Romania have conducted substantial research on the government's earliest connections. In this regard, Romanian historian and archaeologist Vasile Pârvan discusses the migration of Iranians to Europe. According to Prof. Viorel Bageacu, the migration of Aryan peoples to Maghreb involved Iranians moving from their original homeland during a large migration that began approximately 1600 BC and continued well into the period before 800 BC, towards the southeast and the north of the Black Sea. Regarding the historical similarities between Iran and Romania, Dr. Mohammad Ebrahim Bastani Parisi

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writes: “Both lands have experienced wars, massacres, murders, and looting; we are both neighbors of Russia; we both aspire to friendly relations with Western nations; and we have oil, so it can be said that we are both mines and, by nature, enemies.” He cites two significant instances, the first of which is related to the campaign of Darius the Great in or around 513 BC. This instance highlights the documented and recorded history of communication and direct contact between the ethnic groups residing in the present territory of Romania and the people of Iran. Dr. Bastani Parisi also comments on this, stating: “I wish we could understand that if Darius crossed the Danube, he did so during the winter and constructed a bridge across the ice, or if it was during the summer and he did so by boat and whatever happened”.

In any case, the chronicles record that the Iranian kings always kept the water of the four rivers in a special bowl in their palaces and used to read it on Nowruz day. It appears that one of those rivers was the Simou, the Sind, the Euphrates, and the Danube. Even when the Greek philosopher and historian Plutarch wrote his work, it was considered a masterpiece of the campaign because it obscures the breadth and greatness of the Danube. The water of the Nile, Euphrates, and the Danube were brought and kept in the treasury to demonstrate how far the Persia kingdoms reached.

Political Interaction

The dialogue between Fima Ozon Hassan and Stephen the Great (*Ștefan cel Mare*), the ruler of Moldova, represents a significant and well-documented phase of connection between Iran and Romania. A copy of this letter is maintained in the Marciana Library in Venice, Italy. Ozon Hassan asks Stephen the Great to inform the Great Sultan about this situation and coordinate their support and cooperation against the Ottoman army. The image of this

document is available in the archives of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, which I have personally seen. Ozon Hassan is writing to the ruler of Moldova, who is assembling his army to fight against the Ottoman army. With its unique geographic setting, which includes the Carpathian Mountains, the Danube River, and the Black Sea, Romania has historically drawn the attention of other states and countries, including Iran. Additionally, the country's hilly terrain, foothills, and plains have made it an ideal platform for grain production, which has long been a focus for Iranians seeking to meet their agricultural needs. Despite being brief, the following outlines the political, economic, and cultural interactions between the two countries throughout history.

The establishment of an Iranian consulate in Bucharest at the end of the 19th century, along with a proposal to conclude a trade agreement with Romania, marked the beginning of political relations between the two nations. In 1880, the Romanian government used a delegation of Dutch representatives to forge friendly ties and knight Keun had the capacity of honorary consul of Romania. Additionally, Iran recognized Romania's independence for the first time in 1881. That same year, the two nations also exchanged government signs. In 1903, the Iranian government dispatched Mirza Ibrahim as a delegate to Romania, and in October of that year, he delivered his credentials to the Romanian government. In the modern era, this day is seen as the beginning of the establishment of political relations between the two nations.

A delegation from Romania led by Prince George-Valentin Bibescu visited Iran in 1906, during which they presented the Iranian king with the Romanian star. Between the two world wars, relations between the two countries experienced fluctuations. However, after the Second World War, relations between the two

countries resumed in 1946 when Romania established a political representation in Tehran.

Romania and Iran had diplomatic ties from 1890 to 1898. Between 1902 and 1910, Iran established consulate offices in the cities of Galați, Brăila, Iași, Bucharest and Constanța. Additionally, in Tehran, the Romanian side had preliminary talks with the Iranian government in order to conclude a commercial agreement between the two nations. The crucial fact is that in 1948, Iran granted Romania complete commercial rights but the important fact, trade and exchanges between the two nations had completely stopped during the Second World War.

The first commercial agreement between Iran and the Socialist Republic of Romania was signed in Tehran at a crucial moment in 1965, and from that point on, an upward trend in the exchange of political and economic delegations between Iran and Romania began. Although this trend experienced ups and downs, always reached the highest level before the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the leaders of the two countries held bilateral meetings in 1973. Thus, Mohammad Reza Shah visited Romania in 1966, 1970, 1972, and 1973, while Nicolae Ceaușescu traveled to Iran in 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, and 1978. The victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran marked the beginning of a new phase in relations between the two nations. In mid-February 1979, Romania declared its support for the Iranian government by sending a delegation to Iran led by the Grand Mufti of the Muslims. As a result, relations between the two countries began to improve and develop. Bilateral exchanges reached over \$1.2 billion, high-level meetings were held in Bucharest and Tehran, and ties at all levels and fields achieved unprecedented levels. Notably, then-President Seyyed Khamenei paid a visit to Romania in February 1989, and Ceaușescu made his last foreign trip to Iran in December 1989.

After a brief hiatus caused by the events in Romania in December 1989, bilateral engagements resumed their upward trajectory and have continued to do so ever since. In fact, this pattern has persisted throughout the post-communist era, even though the relations between the two countries have not exactly improved. While Romania's integration into the Euro-Atlantic framework had an impact, Romanian leaders have consistently sought to establish extensive political, economic, and cultural ties with Iran. Numerous political delegations, including ministers and Constitutional Court chiefs, have visited both nations during this time. Additionally, Judicial and legislative officials have exchanged visits, with high-ranking delegations led by the speakers of the Iranian and Romanian parliaments traveling to Romania in 1998 and 2001, respectively.

Economic and Financial Cooperation

The economic partnership between Iran and Romania has been a significant aspect of bilateral collaboration throughout history. The existence of Iranian hand-made carpets in a way that is ingrained in Romanian culture serves as at least one example of how the economy and goods are also considered to be part of the relations between the two countries, even though there is no written record of the precise timing of the first commercial exchanges between Romania and Iran.

Any hand-woven carpet is referred to as a Persian carpet, and the Museum of Art Collection, the National Art Museum in Bucharest, and the renowned Peleş Palace and Museum in Sinaia town are just a few of the museums in this nation that house Iranian carpets that were brought to Romania at least 200 years ago. A new political relationship was formed between the two nations at the start of the 20th century, in 1903. Political leaders in Tehran and Bucharest

worked hard to create the framework and conditions for commercial interactions and to sign the first bilateral trade agreement. Between 1956 and 1964, following World War II, Romania exported a small quantity of carpets, textiles, and foodstuffs to Iran. Later, products such as machine tools, tractors, and chemical products were added to this trade. As a result, by 1960, the volume of bilateral exchanges had risen to about \$100,000, and by 1963 and 1964, it had surpassed \$400,000.

After ten years of discussions between the officials of the two countries, the first commercial and financial agreement was finally signed in 1964, marking a significant step forward in the promotion of bilateral economic cooperation. This agreement included measures that would raise the transaction volume to \$7 million. With the improvement of ties to the embassies in Bucharest and Tehran, a new phase in bilateral economic and commercial relations began. In 1965, a new commercial and payments agreement with a three-year term was drafted and signed. This agreement specified various goods to be shipped from Romania and imported from Iran, including rice, cotton, minerals, and textiles were also anticipated. Additionally, the volume of exchanges was also increased to \$8 million.

The Economic Cooperation Agreement, which had a ten-year validity between the parties, was one of the significant documents of economic cooperation between the two nations. Signed in 1965, it aimed to establish a framework for the export of machinery and industrial equipment from Romania to Iran. This agreement specified that Romania shipped 20,000 CKD (Completely Knocked-Down) tractors to Iran annually, and included an agreement to build a tractor production line with a 5,000-tractor annual capacity and raise it to 10,000 tractors annually. On the basis of this agreement, further contracts were also inked. These included the development of a wood production complex with a

\$15 million capital investment, the delivery of wagons for the \$35 million shipment of products and electronic equipment to Iran. By 1970, the entire value of the exchange contracts between the parties exceeded \$100 million. It was decided that 85% of the repayment would be made in crude oil over a ten-year period, with the remaining 15% being made up of other goods and cash. In 1979, a new commercial and payments memorandum with a five-year validity period was signed. This memorandum aimed to continue commercial exchanges between the two countries, allowing for the import of all kinds of goods from Romania and raising the volume of exchanges to \$500 million. Additionally, the Iranian side also consented to import cheese and urea from Romania as part of this arrangement, along with other products such as cement, which would be imported via ships.

Furthermore, this document states that the Iranian side gave the Romanian government a credit in the amount of tens of millions of dollars for the realization of industrial projects. Consequently, it should be noted that, generally speaking, the value of bilateral exchanges fluctuated between 10 and 500 million dollars in the 1970s. Additionally, during this time, production lines generating 10,000 tractors annually, 4,000 tow trucks annually, and 25,000 electric motors annually were in operation. Romania foresaw and carried out the building of cement storage facilities, silo warehouses, and electricity transmission lines in Iran. Prior to the Islamic Revolution, Romania also imported some consumer, industrial, and edible goods from Iran, the most significant of which included the imports of 40 buses, 200 minibuses of Iran National, raisins, and pistachios. Romania also imported Iranian carpet from 1975 to 1979.

The success of the Islamic revolution in Iran led to a temporary halt in the two nations' economic and commercial collaboration; however, a year later, the relationship has resumed. In order to