India, Iran, and the GCC: Trilateral Cooperation in the Making*

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India's close relations with the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states, especially the key players Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are beyond the conventional norms and practices, but nonetheless as durable as can be imagined.

In parallel with and as a complement to these strong ties, relations between India and Iran are developing amidst some turbulence (mutual need will steer the future cooperation). As a result, it is becoming more evident that the three, if one lumps together all GCC states, have common interests in a trilateral cooperation that benefits from the respective strengths of the parties involved.

As a fast-developing BRICS country, India needs both of its partners to fulfil its aspirations to become a major power on the world scene, on a par with ever more ambitious China. India’s tactics differ from those of the “Awakened Dragon” (China), in that “the Tiger” (India) uses a more patient and subtle approach. This is mainly due to its ability to steer more confidently than the “Dragon”, sometimes seen as short on patience.

India, the biggest trading partner of GCC states, has over the past few years laid solid foundations for its relations with Iran, as their common interests are becoming more evident in view of current trends in world politics and economy. The bilateral ties being cemented between India and Iran include in particular cooperation in the energy sector, with both nations genuinely seeking to establish firm ties in that particular area. This is evidenced especially by India’s oil imports