



Yemen crisis: Exploring India-Yemen relations

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Abstract

India and Yemen share a long history of cultural, commercial, and diplomatic ties. The bilateral relations between the two countries are built on mutual respect, friendship, and cooperation. India has been a key partner in Yemen's development and reconstruction efforts, especially in the fields of infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Yemen, on the other hand, has been a crucial partner in India's energy security and maritime trade. However, the ongoing conflict in Yemen has posed significant challenges to the bilateral relations between India and Yemen. India has been closely monitoring the situation in Yemen and has been providing humanitarian assistance to the Yemeni people. India has also been working with the international community to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In recent years, India has been expanding its engagement with Yemen, particularly in the areas of counter-terrorism, security, and defence. India has been providing training and capacity building support to Yemeni security forces to combat the threat of terrorism and piracy in the region. India has also been working closely with Yemen on issues related to energy security, food security, and disaster management. India and Yemen have a shared interest in promoting regional stability, peace, and economic development. Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing conflict in Yemen, both countries remain committed to strengthening their bilateral relations and working towards a peaceful and prosperous future for their people.

Keywords: bilateral relations, conflict, humanitarian, food security, energy security

Introduction

India-Yemen relations have a long history that dates back to ancient times when the two nations engaged in trade, cultural and religious exchanges. The modern diplomatic relations between India and Yemen were established in 1947, when Yemen recognized India's independence. Since then, the two nations have maintained friendly and cooperative ties, although the relationship has had its ups and downs. In recent years, the bilateral relations have faced challenges due to the ongoing conflict in Yemen, but both countries have remained committed to strengthening their ties and addressing common challenges.

India's engagement with Yemen has been based on mutual respect, friendship and cooperation, with a focus on developing economic, commercial and cultural ties. India has been a key partner in Yemen's development and reconstruction efforts, with a particular focus on infrastructure, healthcare and education. In return, Yemen has played a crucial role in India's energy security and maritime trade. However, the ongoing conflict in Yemen has posed significant challenges to the bilateral relations between India and Yemen. India has been closely monitoring the situation in Yemen and has been providing humanitarian assistance to the Yemeni people. India has also been working with the international community to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Despite the challenges, India and Yemen have shared interests in promoting regional stability, peace and economic development. In recent years, India has expanded its engagement with Yemen, particularly in the areas of counter-terrorism, security and defence. India has been providing training and capacity building support to Yemeni security forces to combat the threat of terrorism and piracy in the region. India has also been working closely with Yemen on issues related to energy security, food security

and disaster management. India-Yemen relations have a long and rich history that has evolved over time. Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing conflict in Yemen, both countries remain committed to strengthening their bilateral relations and working towards a peaceful and prosperous future for their people.

India and Yemen's historical ties

India and Yemen have a long history of cultural and commercial ties that date back to ancient times. Yemen was an important centre of trade, religion and culture in the Arabian Peninsula, and the Indian Ocean was a key trading route between the two nations. The ancient city of Aden, located on the southern coast of Yemen, was a major hub for maritime trade with India. Indian merchants and sailors regularly visited the city to trade goods such as spices, textiles and pearls, and Yemeni merchants travelled to India to trade in goods such as frankincense and myrrh. The trade between the two nations also facilitated the exchange of ideas, cultures and religions. The spread of Islam from Yemen to India is an example of the cultural exchange that occurred between the two nations.

In the medieval period, the relationship between India and Yemen grew even stronger. The city of Aden became a major centre of Islamic learning and attracted many Indian scholars and students. Indian traders established settlements in Aden, and the city became a cosmopolitan centre with a diverse population of Arabs, Indians, Persians, Africans and Jews. The trade between India and Yemen continued to flourish, and Aden became one of the wealthiest cities in the world. During the colonial period, the relationship between India and Yemen was marked by British influence. The British occupied Aden in 1839 and established a colony that included parts of southern Yemen and the nearby islands of

Socotra and Perim. India was also under British rule during this period, and the British used Aden as a strategic base for their operations in the Indian Ocean.

After India's independence in 1947, Yemen was one of the first countries to recognize India's sovereignty. In 1955, India and Yemen signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation that provided a framework for their bilateral relations. The two nations established diplomatic missions in each other's capitals, and Indian companies began investing in Yemen's infrastructure, healthcare and education sectors. In the 1970s, the relationship between India and Yemen reached a new level of cooperation. India provided significant economic and technical assistance to Yemen, helping the country to develop its infrastructure and human resources. Indian companies established joint ventures in Yemen, and Yemeni students came to India to study in fields such as medicine, engineering and management.

In recent years, the bilateral relations between India and Yemen have focused on energy security and counter-terrorism. Yemen has been a key partner in India's energy security, with over 70 percent of India's oil imports passing through the Bab-el-Mandeb strait in Yemen. India has also been providing training and capacity building support to Yemeni security forces to combat the threat of terrorism and piracy in the region. The historical relationship between India and Yemen is characterized by a long-standing cultural and commercial exchange that has evolved over time. Despite the challenges posed by colonialism and modern geopolitical issues, the two nations have maintained a friendly and cooperative relationship, based on mutual respect and understanding.

India's interest in Yemen

India has significant interests in Yemen, particularly in the areas of energy security, trade, and regional stability. The following are some of the key factors driving India's interest in Yemen

1. Energy Security

Yemen is an important transit point for India's oil imports. The Bab-el-Mandeb strait, located off the coast of Yemen, is a crucial chokepoint for the shipping of oil from the Persian Gulf to the Suez Canal. According to estimates, more than 70 percent of India's oil imports pass through this strait, making it a vital part of India's energy security. Any disruption to shipping through this strait could have a significant impact on India's energy supplies and economy.

2. Trade

Yemen is a potential market for Indian goods and services, particularly in the areas of pharmaceuticals, engineering, and IT services. Indian companies have been active in Yemen, especially in the oil and gas sector. In recent years, Yemen has also shown interest in importing Indian rice and other food products.

3. Counter-terrorism

Yemen has been facing a significant threat from terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State. India has been providing training and capacity building support to

Yemeni security forces to combat terrorism and piracy in the region. India has also been sharing intelligence with Yemen to address the common threat posed by terrorism.

4. Regional Stability

Yemen is a key player in the geopolitics of the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. Any instability or conflict in Yemen could have a spill over effect on the wider region, including India. India has been supportive of efforts to stabilize Yemen and promote peace and reconciliation in the country.

India's interests in Yemen are driven by a range of factors, including energy security, trade, counter-terrorism, and regional stability. India's engagement with Yemen has been based on mutual respect and cooperation, with the aim of promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

Yemen Conflict and India's Concern

The Yemen crisis has been ongoing since 2014 and has had significant implications for India's interests in the region. The following are some of the key points regarding India's stake in the Yemen crisis:

1. Energy Security

Yemen's location near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which is crucial for the transit of oil from the Persian Gulf to the Suez Canal, makes it a key player in India's energy security. The ongoing conflict in Yemen has led to security concerns in the region, which has impacted the movement of oil tankers through the strait, and has led to increased prices of oil.

2. Security Concerns

The conflict in Yemen has created security concerns in the region. The presence of extremist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has led to a destabilization of the region, which could impact India's security interests.

3. Evacuation of Indian Nationals

India has a significant number of nationals in Yemen, including expatriates and migrant workers. The ongoing conflict has led to the evacuation of Indian nationals from the country. In 2015, India launched Operation Rahat to evacuate its citizens from Yemen.

4. Humanitarian Assistance

India has provided humanitarian assistance to Yemen, including food aid and medical supplies. In 2018, India contributed \$5 million to the United Nations' Yemen Humanitarian Fund to support humanitarian efforts in the country.

5. Diplomatic efforts

India has been supportive of efforts to resolve the Yemen crisis through peaceful means. India has called for an inclusive political process that can lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. India has also supported the efforts of the United Nations to broker a peace deal in Yemen.

India has a significant stake in the Yemen crisis, particularly in terms of energy security, security concerns, and the safety of Indian nationals. India has been actively engaged in efforts to address the crisis, including providing humanitarian assistance, supporting the evacuation of its citizens, and advocating for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The operation Raahat and its significance

Operation Raahat was a military operation conducted by the Indian government to evacuate Indian nationals from Yemen during the Yemeni Crisis in 2015. The following are some key points about Operation Raahat:

1. Launch of the operation

The operation was launched on 31 March 2015 in response to the deteriorating security situation in Yemen. The operation was conducted jointly by the Indian Air Force (IAF), the Indian Navy, and the Ministry of External Affairs.

2. Evacuation of Indian Nationals

The primary objective of Operation Raahat was to evacuate Indian nationals from Yemen. The operation involved the evacuation of over 5,600 people, including Indian nationals and foreign nationals of Indian origin, from the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, and the port city of Aden.

3. Execution of the operation

The IAF deployed several transport aircraft, including the C-17 Globemaster and the C-130 Hercules, to transport Indian nationals from Yemen to Djibouti. The Indian Navy deployed several warships, including the INS Sumitra and the INS Mumbai, to evacuate Indian nationals from Aden.

4. Challenges faced

Operation Raahat faced several challenges, including the ongoing conflict in Yemen, the lack of a functional airport in Sana'a, and the deteriorating security situation in Aden. The operation was also impacted by the closure of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which led to the suspension of shipping operations in the region.

5. Success of the operation

Operation Raahat was widely regarded as a success, as it was able to evacuate a large number of Indian nationals from Yemen amidst a difficult and complex security situation. The operation was hailed by several countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, for its efficiency and effectiveness.

Operation Raahat was a significant military operation conducted by the Indian government to evacuate Indian nationals from Yemen during the Yemeni Crisis in 2015. The operation was widely regarded as a success and demonstrated India's ability to conduct complex military operations in difficult and challenging situations.

The significance of Operation Raahat can be understood in the following points

1. Rescue of Indian Nationals

Operation Raahat was primarily aimed at rescuing Indian nationals from the conflict-ridden Yemeni cities of Sana'a and Aden. The operation was conducted successfully, and over 5,600 Indian nationals were evacuated, which demonstrated India's commitment to the safety and well-being of its citizens.

2. Boost to India's Image

The success of Operation Raahat was widely publicized, both in India and internationally, which enhanced India's image as a responsible and capable nation. The operation demonstrated India's ability to conduct complex military operations in difficult and challenging situations.

3. Diplomatic gains

Operation Raahat also helped India to forge closer diplomatic ties with several countries, including Djibouti, which allowed India to use its airport and seaport facilities for the evacuation. The operation also helped India to enhance its ties with Saudi Arabia, which provided air cover to the Indian aircraft during the evacuation.

4. Learning lessons

The success of Operation Raahat helped the Indian government to learn several lessons, which were later applied during the evacuation of Indian nationals from other conflict zones, such as Libya and Iraq. The operation highlighted the need for better coordination between various government agencies during crisis situations.

Operation Raahat was a significant military operation conducted by the Indian government to evacuate Indian nationals from Yemen during the Yemeni Crisis in 2015. The operation demonstrated India's commitment to the safety and well-being of its citizens and enhanced India's image as a responsible and capable nation. The operation also helped India to forge closer diplomatic ties with several countries and provided important lessons for future crisis situations.

India-Yemen relations' prospects in the future

The future potential of India-Yemen relations is significant and can be explored in several areas. Some of the key areas of cooperation that can be explored by India and Yemen are

1. Energy cooperation

India and Yemen can explore the possibility of joint ventures in the oil and gas sector. India's expertise in the refining and marketing of petroleum products and Yemen's abundant oil reserves could be mutually beneficial.

2. Infrastructure development

India can assist Yemen in developing its infrastructure, including roads, ports, and airports. This can improve Yemen's connectivity with the region and boost its trade and tourism potential.

3. Humanitarian assistance

Yemen has been facing a humanitarian crisis due to the ongoing conflict in the country. India can provide humanitarian assistance to Yemen, including food aid and medical supplies.

4. Cultural exchange

India and Yemen have a shared history and cultural heritage. Greater cultural exchange and people-to-people contacts can deepen the bilateral relationship and promote mutual understanding.

5. Defence cooperation

India can provide training and technical assistance to the Yemeni security forces in the areas of counter-terrorism and maritime security.

There is significant potential for India and Yemen to deepen their bilateral relationship in various areas of cooperation. The two countries share a long-standing friendship, and with concerted efforts, they can further enhance their relationship for mutual benefit.

Conclusion

India and Yemen have shared a long history of diplomatic and trade relations dating back several centuries. Over the years, both countries have cooperated in various fields, including trade, culture, education, and health, to name a few. However, the ongoing conflict in Yemen has strained the bilateral ties between the two nations. India has been providing humanitarian assistance to Yemen, including food and medical supplies, and has also helped evacuate Indian nationals stranded in Yemen. The two countries have also worked together on counter-terrorism measures and maritime security. Moving forward, it is essential for India and Yemen to strengthen their relations and cooperate in various fields to promote peace and stability in the region. India's support for the peace process in Yemen and its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Yemen are commendable and should continue. In the long run, a stable and prosperous Yemen is in India's best interest, and the two countries must work towards this goal through greater cooperation and dialogue. It is hoped that India-Yemen relations will continue to flourish in the future, bringing mutual benefits to both nations.

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