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FUTURE STUDIES OF IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS IN THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER

Abstract

A new architecture of international relations was revealed in the article, showing how the Iranian state became universal, and analyzing the basic principles of Iranian foreign policy. We examined my three author's predictions for the development of the JCPOA, analyzed relations with the Middle East, the Caucasus region, the Central Asian countries, and Iranian-Russian-Chinese-Indian relations. I have presented prediction scenarios for the development of Iranian foreign policy in the short and medium term based on the above configuration of Iran's foreign policy in this article.

As well as assessing what is happening currently, we also examined Iran's political and economic interactions with Middle Eastern, Caucasus and Central Asian nations. Lastly, I tried to give an approximate assessment of the policy of the NATO countries and their allies in the Middle East, answering the questions:

- 1) What is the US policy in connection with the current situation in Ukraine and the imposition of tough sanctions against Russia?
- 2) What can the United States do in the short to medium term to provide military support? Will the military resources of NATO countries be allocated to support the armed conflict in Ukraine?

The article uses the methods of Future Studies and strategic forecasting in the field of foreign and defense policy of Iran, SWOT analysis, the results of interviews and hybrid surveys of experts using the Delphi method.

Keywords: *international relation, regional security, SCO, policy, Middle East, JCPOA*

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Yeni qlobal nizamda İranın xarici siyaseti və qonşularla münasibətləri haqqında proqnozlar

Xülasə

Məqalədə İran dövlətinin universallaşmasının səbəbləri göstərilərək İranın xarici siyasetinin əsasında dayanan prinsiplər analiz edilib və beynəlxalq münasibətlərin yeni arxitekturası aşkarla çıxarılıb. JCPOA-nın inkişafı ilə bağlı üç müəllifin proqnozunu araşdıraraq, Yaxın Şərqi, Qafqaz regionu, Mərkəzi Asiya ölkələri ilə əlaqələr, İran-Rusiya-Çin-Hindistan münasibətlərini tədqiqata cəlb etmişik.

Bu məqalədə tərəfimizdən İranın xarici siyasetinin inkişafının yuxarıdakı konfiqurasiyasına əsaslanaraq, qısa və ortamüddəli perspektivdə proqnozlaşdırılması ilə əlaqəli sənəarılər təqdim edilib, hazırda baş verənləri dəyərləndirməklə yanaşı, İranın Yaxın Şərqi, Qafqaz və Mərkəzi Asiya ölkələri ilə qarşılıqlı əlaqələrinin siyasi-iqtisadi aspektləri araşdırılıb.

Sonda NATO ölkələri və müttəfiqlərinin Yaxın Şərqi siyaseti haqqında təxmini bir dəyərləndirmə edərək, aşağıdakı sualları cavablaşdırmağa çalışmışam:

1. ABŞ-nin Ukraynadakı mövcud vəziyyət və Rusiyaya qarşı tətbiq olunan sərt sanksiyalarla bağlı xarici siyaseti nədir?
2. ABŞ qısa və orta perspektivdə hərbi dəstək məsələsində nə edə bilər? NATO ölkələrinin hərbi resursları Ukraynadakı silahlı münaqişəyə dəstək üçün cəlb ediləcəkmi?

Məqalədə İranın xarici və müdafiə siyaseti sahəsində proqnozlaşdırma və gələcək araştırma metodlarından, SWOT analizi və Delfi metodundan istifadə edən ekspertlərin müsahibələrinin, hibrid sorğularının nəticələrindən istifadə olunub.

Açar sözlər: beynəlxalq münasibət, regional təhlükəsizlik, SCO, siyaset, Yaxın Şərqi, JCPOA

Introduction

Today, the image of modern Iran in the world is very ambiguous. This is largely due to the deliberate policy of the United States to discredit this country in the international arena.

It is known that Iran has been under US's sanctions for more than 40 years. However, this sanctions policy towards Iran did not produce tangible results. Moreover, at present there are no signs indicating that in the future Iran may become directly or indirectly dependent on the United States and its allies.

The main principles of Iranian foreign policy are Islamic unity, ensuring stability and establishing good neighborly relations with all countries of the region.

This allows Iran to occupy one of the dominant roles in the most important region of the planet – Western Asia, which includes the Near and Middle East, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea zone and Central Asia. Thus, positioning itself in the international aspect as an absolutely pivotal power in the region, whose status is simply not comparable with the status of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan or even Turkey.

It is worth saying that the history of Iran's foreign policy at different stages of evolutionary development had its own characteristics, but it was always pragmatic and met the national interests of the country.

Without going deep into the history of Iran's foreign policy, since this requires a separate comprehensive study and is beyond the scope of our subsection, we will confine ourselves to the foreign policy of modern Iran.

The beginning of a new era of Iranian foreign policy

Today, Iran is a universal state, because, since the Islamic Revolution, Khomeini's conceptual ideology, has remained an unchanged constant state ideology and the basis of foreign policy. The IRI categorically rejects ethnic nationalism as a political activity and social practice, essentially declaring Iran a nation-state (Abrahamian, 1993:48).

The beginning of a new era of foreign policy was the change of the old government and the arrival of a new one on August 5, 2021. According to the people, the old government that put the collective West, unfortunately, did not justify itself. The new government and business elite of Iran was deeply disappointed in the prospects for establishing economic partnerships with European countries, since business from the EU turned out to be the most sensitive to restrictions from Washington.

The new format of foreign policy is based on the fact that - Iran will strive for effective cooperation with all countries, including neighboring ones. The main direction of Iran's foreign policy will be directed to the East. These are neighbors in the Near and Middle East, in the post-Soviet space and other Asian countries. An important emphasis will be placed on cooperation with Russia, China and India.

Of course, this partnership will be based on various bases, with political, trade-economic, military, military-technical content predominating in different proportions (Sanaei, Karami, 2021).

Now, the outline of the main measures of Iran's foreign policy for the medium and long term has been outlined. Below are the main directions of Iran's foreign policy at the present stage.

First. The conclusion of a new "nuclear deal".

Second. Middle East (Gulf countries, Iraq and Syria), which includes the following components:

- opposition to US hegemony in the Middle East;
- Iranian-Arab relations;
- cooperation with the countries of the Near and Middle East on the formation of a new security architecture in the region.

Third. Middle East (Afghan direction), which includes the following components:

- countering the threats of extremism and terrorism;
- cooperation with Russia, China, Pakistan, India to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan;

Fourth. Caucasus region and Central Asia, which include the following components:

- Iranian-Azerbaijani-Turkish relations;
- trade and economic cooperation of Iran with the EAEU, the SCO and other countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation;

Fifth. Iranian-Russian-Chinese-Indian relations, which include the following components:

- military-technical cooperation;
- trade and economic cooperation

Let's consider the key directions of Iran's foreign policy. The first is the conclusion of a new "nuclear deal". One of the key objectives of Iran's foreign policy in relations with the West is the conclusion of a new "nuclear deal", since the revenue side of the national budget requires the unhindered sale of oil and active international trade.

Since Joe Biden came to power, the US administration has been trying to revive the nuclear deal and bring Iran back into it. However, Tehran took a very competent and legally impeccable position. Iranian authorities want the US to first lift illegally imposed sanctions, and only then return to the deal.

According to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, there is now a high probability that this deal will be signed (3).

However, the draft budget for Iranian year 1401 (March 2022-March 2023), presented to the Majlis by President Ebrahim Raisi on December 12, indicates that Tehran does not count on a positive solution to the problem of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and bases its financial plans mainly on countering US sanctions.

In this regard, I propose to consider my forecast scenarios for the development of events around the JCPOA.

Scenario № 1 – "Conclusion of a "nuclear deal" and the lifting of US sanctions on Iran."

Scenario № 2 – "Interim agreement on some aspects of the JCPOA while easing part of the sanctions with Iran."

Scenario № 3 – "Not concluding a" nuclear deal ", tightening the sanctions regime against Iran."

Scenario evaluation will include three options – "most likely", "likely" and "unlikely". It should be noted that it is not at all necessary that this will happen, but it is necessary to see all scenarios. This makes it possible to predict the development of various managerial decisions by the Iranian authorities. Each of these options implies appropriate political and economic support. Let's consider them.

Scenario № 1

The conclusion of a new "nuclear deal" between Iran and the "5+1" group (Great Britain, China, Russia, USA, France) and Germany will create a "window of opportunity" for Iran in the following areas:

- The West will be forced to relax or lift the sanctions regime, thereby opening up new opportunities for Iran - the country will again have access to its previously frozen assets of about \$ 100 billion and the restoration of Iranian crude oil exports. It will also significantly increase the government's hard currency revenues, which will be required to contain the current budget deficit, as well as its direct consequences, is high inflation;
- The lifting of sanctions will require the authorities to reform the entire financial sector - This will allow the Iranian economy to achieve sustainable growth rates of up to 8% per year. Inflation can be contained to about 15%, with a downward trend;
- The government and enterprises of the country will have access to the international financial system, thereby reducing pressure on the domestic banking sector;
- The position of Western companies in the Iranian economy will strengthen - this will create a balance in the Iranian market between Western capital and Chinese capital, which has become

quite stronger during the sanctions period. Chinese capital will become the main competitor of the West in the Iranian market;

– Will ensure the regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region, as well as reduce the scale of the American military presence, create conditions for the formation of a new security system in the region, contributing to the improvement of relations between Iran and the Arab countries of the Gulf (Həsənov, 2005:63).

The main requirements from the Iranian authorities are:

- if a JCPOA agreement is reached, new generation centrifuges should be sealed under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Iran, and not completely destroyed;
- lifting of sanctions against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is the national army, and the national army cannot be included in the list of terrorist groups, this is unacceptable.

Assessment of the implementation of Scenario №. 1 – likely.

Scenario № 2

"Interim agreement on some aspects of the JCPOA while easing part of the sanctions with Iran." If an interim agreement is concluded under the JCPOA, there will be a reduction in the level of confrontation and some easing of sanctions. This will allow Iran to solve some financial gaps and allow economic players to build a new model of trade and economic cooperation with Iran. With the improvement of the entire system of economic and financial management, Iran's economic growth of up to 6% per year is possible. Despite active attempts on the part of Western countries to prevent the military and political expansion of the country, Iran will continue to strive to strengthen the status of a leading country in the Middle East. Due to economic policy and international cooperation, primarily with Russia, China and India, Iran will become a leader in the Middle East region and the Islamic world.

Assessment of the implementation of Scenario № 2 the most likely.

Scenario № 3

"Not concluding a "nuclear deal", tightening the sanctions regime against Iran" - sanctions will become tougher, Iran will activate its nuclear program.

Maintaining the status quo will support external pressure and force the Iranian economy to look for new ways to neutralize the negative impact of sanctions.

So far, the focus has been on import substitution by building domestic capacity, including expanding refining and petrochemical capacity, reducing dependence on Western technology sources, with a particular focus on trade with China and Russia, and promoting trade with Iran's neighbors.

Such a policy somewhat stabilized the country's economy in 2021, but this path cannot be easily continued, since alternative financial resources will decrease over time.

It will require attracting investments from the Iranian diaspora, as well as strengthening close cooperation with the banking systems of key trading partners – China, Russia, Turkey and India.

Assessment of implementation of Scenario №. 3 – unlikely.

The second is the Middle East

Opposition to US hegemony in the Middle East.

Diplomatic relations between Iran and the US have been at a confrontational stage for more than forty years. The Iranian authorities understand that as long as the US is present in the region, there is no need to talk about stability and regional security.

One of the main missions of Iran's foreign diplomacy is that the US leave the region and the expulsion of US forces from the region should be inevitable. A striking example is the Middle East tour of US President Joe Biden from July 13-16, 2022, visiting the following countries - Israel, Saudi Arabia and Jordan (5).

The main purpose of his visit was to search for alternative hydrocarbons to Russian ones and to create an anti-Iranian coalition between Israel and the Arab countries.

This was served by the following geopolitical events:

- 1) conducting a special military operation by Russian troops in Ukraine;

- 2) the sanctions war against Russia, including the refusal of the EU countries to import Russian energy resources;
- 3) the emerging union of three countries – China, Russia and Iran;
- 4) growing pressure from traditional US allies against the backdrop of rising energy prices in Europe;
- 5) the miscalculation of former US Presidents B. Obama and D. Trump when choosing a foreign policy, where the “American turn” was made towards the Asia-Pacific region, in order to counter the growing military power of Beijing, and not to the Middle East.

How did Biden's Middle East tour end?

In Israel, Joe Biden signed the Declaration of Strategic Partnership. Saudi Arabia has signed 18 agreements and memorandums of cooperation in the fields of energy, investment and space. However, Joe Biden could not achieve an increase in Saudi Arabia's oil production and a decrease in its cost.

Thus, in 2022-2023, the US will remain an important player in the Middle East.

Iran, in order to prevent the malicious actions of the United States, will continue to strengthen its ties with Russia and China, including in military-technical cooperation.

Moreover, recently Iran decided to strengthen its geostrategic positions by applying for membership in the BRICS, which unites more than half of the world's population.

Iranian-Arab relations

In the Arab world, Iran's relations with Libya and Yemen, as well as with Syria, are most preferable, relations with which Iran considers the most geopolitically acceptable, partner and even, in a certain sense, allied, bearing in mind the identity of positions towards Israel and the Palestinian movement.

Iran views current relations with the regimes in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan through the prism of these countries' close cooperation with the US and Israel.

Iran is closely following the developments in Algeria and Sudan, where Islamic forces have significantly increased, and does not abandon its presence in Lebanon, where it supports Shiite and other Islamic political and paramilitary organizations whose activities are directed against Israel and the United States.

Iran is considering Africa, especially the Islamic countries of the East Coast – Tanzania, Somalia, Eritrea, etc., as well as the Islamic countries of West Africa – Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Senegal, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Liberia as their possible partners and allies, members of multi-level economic interstate organizations, ideally included in a political union oriented towards Tehran.

However, there are considerable difficulties for Iran in the Islamic countries of Africa. For example, the entire cultural and intellectual life of some African countries is based not on Arabic and graphics, but on French and English, in Latin. Iran's relations with Kuwait and Qatar are uneven, somewhat better with the United Arab Emirates, quite friendly with Oman.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have deep disagreements on a range of regional security issues, some of which are difficult to fully overcome. But, with all these contradictions, Iran and Saudi Arabia are united by an interest in countering the self-proclaimed Islamic State, preventing direct conflict with each other, ensuring the inviolability of borders, uninterrupted oil supplies and freedom of navigation.

Thus, the two sides are able to reach an agreement on certain agreed rules of the game, are able to seriously reduce interfaith tension in the region and create a more favorable political climate for building a new security system.

Cooperation with the countries of the Near and Middle East on the formation of a new security architecture in the region.

The Middle East is the only region in the world where there is no legitimate, capable and representative multilateral security organization. It is literally littered with the fruits of various multilateral initiatives, from the Arab League to the EU Mediterranean Dialogue and NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

Iran is not a member of regional collective security systems; it is a supporter of solving all problems exclusively by the forces of regional states. Iran's non-bloc status and its commitment to bilateral development of relations with foreign partners create fertile ground for establishing close cooperation with neighboring states.

At present, the political circles of individual countries of the Middle East are considering the formation of a Middle East analogue of NATO. So, on March 23, 2022, in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh, negotiations were held between the leaders of Israel, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (Eugene, 2003:39).

During the talks, the issue of creating a local Middle East analogue of NATO was raised. This initiative was previously proposed by the United States during the era of the presidency of Donald Trump. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan and Turkey are potential contenders for joining the NATO Middle East bloc – MESA (Middle East Strategic Alliance).

Instructive lessons for building a new security system in the Persian Gulf can be drawn from the experience of creating a number of regional security structures in the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific region and Europe. In the short term, the most relevant example of creating a new forum for regional dialogue on international security issues is the activities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In the long term, the history of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and its successor, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), provides useful experience in the operation of more structured, legally binding security systems.

Third. Middle East (Afghanistan)

After the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, Iran is pursuing a balanced and pragmatic policy, trying to find a balance in building its foreign policy strategy in the region. The Iranian authorities understand that it is necessary to interact with any government located in Kabul, otherwise another hotbed of tension will appear on the map of the region, which is not in the interests of the new Iranian government, which stands for stability and calm both at its borders and in the region as a whole.

The Iranian authorities are simultaneously cooperating with the Taliban and maintaining contacts with the anti-Taliban resistance forces, without entering into a confrontation with any of the warring parties, adapting to what is happening, protecting their security from any unexpected threats.

The general pace of development of these relations will depend on a large number of factors, including the policy of the Taliban towards the Afghan Shiites, the effectiveness of countering the terrorist threat, and the organization of control over the common border. This approach is due to the combination of political, economic and geopolitical interests of Tehran.

As for cooperation with other states on the Afghan issue, the Iranian authorities are ready to work on the problems of Afghanistan only within the framework of UN programs or jointly with the countries of the region (China, Russia, Pakistan, India, etc.), but will not cooperate with the United States and others "trans-regional countries.

Fourth. Caucasus region and countries of Central Asia.

The Caucasus region and Central Asia are a geopolitically important node between Iran and Turkey in dominating this space.

Iranian-Azerbaijani-Turkish relations

Azerbaijan has an ancient and honorable state history, a rich state heritage, and inheritance traditions. Although these traditions were repeatedly violated in the difficult and tragic moments of Azerbaijan, even though there were riots, our people restored historical justice after severe trials, demonstrated their loyalty to the ancient traditions of state power, and not only managed to preserve their independence, through defense but also through diplomacy. It is extremely important for Azerbaijan, which is located in a complex and sensitive area of the world – geographically at the intersection of the West and the East, at the meeting place of civilizations, both in the past and now, to correctly define and implement foreign policy, and in strategic approaches at the intersection of geographic and geo-economic interests.

Thus, in addition to protecting its national interests and the position of a leading state in the region, our country establishes mutual relations with the political, economic and cultural space of the

West, Islamic countries, the Turkic world and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. states and increases international cooperation and equal cooperative relations at present, Iran

has found itself under the serious influence of two factors – the policy of isolating it in the international arena and containment in the Transcaucasus, pursued by the West (Quluzadə, 1999:67).

Staying in such a geopolitical context, Iran does not push away neighboring regional players in the face of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem, they try to be close to them.

The Iranian authorities understand that the dynamics of geopolitical changes in the Middle East puts on the agenda the redistribution of spheres of influence, one of the manifestations of which is the Turkish-led “Turkic Axis”.

In this regard, Iran's foreign policy activities in the Caucasus region and Central Asian countries will be directed:

- 1) to fight against Wahhabi movements and organizations, to support traditional Islamic structures in the region;
- 2) bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation between Iranian-Azerbaijani and Iranian-Turkish relations;
- 3) to establish a partnership with the Turkish political elite to create a new Islamic economic association, where the positions of the pro-American-minded Arab countries would be weak (2007:29-38).

There are already certain steps in this direction. In particular, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan visited Iran on July 19-20, 2022. During a joint press conference (Russia, Iran, Turkey), Erdogan specifically focused on the economic aspect of cooperation between Ankara and Tehran: “Currently, the trade turnover between the two countries has reached \$7.5 billion. Tehran and Ankara have set a trade turnover goal of \$30 billion. to achieve it, it is necessary to increase the current indicators by three times” (9).

The Turkish president's visit to Iran could be a turning point between the countries, as talks discussed the creation of industrial cities and joint technology and science parks, as well as the extension of a 25-year contract to supply Iranian gas to Turkey.

For Turkey, relations with Iran are important not because of Syria and the actions of the US and Israel in the region. For Turkey, the Cyprus conflict and the confrontation with Greece are vital (10).

Iran's trade and economic cooperation within the framework of the EAEU, the SCO, the BRI megaproject, bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other countries of Central Asia.

The priority task of Iran's foreign policy, within the framework of trade and economic cooperation with the countries of Central Asia, is to form a project "great economic space" based on the gradual political and economic integration of Iran with the countries of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Armenia, Georgia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and then Syria and Afghanistan. These countries are not yet formally involved in other economic communities that have a real content, they have a long-term interest in Iran as a political and economic partner (Serdar, 2017:63-74).

In addition, these countries have a clear economic orientation - raw materials or technology, and their participation in a hypothetical new economic community will create a very compact and integral space, which will serve as a real basis for its subsequent expansion.

As for Iran's cooperation with the EAEU, the SCO and in the BRI megaproject, there are great opportunities for Iran. In particular, Iran can strengthen its economic positions in the Middle East and Central Asian countries, gain access to the most important transit routes to Pakistan and India. The very idea of Iran's rapprochement with the EAEU fits well into its strategy of reorienting itself to Asian countries and their markets, as well as abandoning the dollar in trade settlements and switching to national currencies.

Iran's interest in membership in the SCO lies in the fact that all SCO member countries oppose the West, in its desire to seize and control the energy resources of the region. Such a coincidence of interests creates the basis for a strong alliance.

Fifth. Iranian-Russian-Chinese-Indian relations. Iran has special relations with the three powers of Eurasia – Russia, China and India, although the place and importance of each of these countries in Iranian politics is ambiguous.

Russia

Iran's relations with Russia are very pragmatic. In particular, Iran views Russia as an important ally and partner in its anti-NATO policy, in obtaining nuclear and other high technologies, in purchasing modern types of weapons and military equipment, in conducting joint military exercises, in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

For example, Russia and Iran signed a roadmap for cooperation in trade and industry until 2020. The five-year "road map" between Russia and Iran for the development of industry involves the implementation of more than 70 projects in the field of mechanical engineering and the supply of high-tech equipment. A contract was also signed for the construction of two new power units of the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran. The implementation of the Bushehr-2 project will take 10 years. The launch of the second unit is scheduled for October 2024; the third unit will be launched in April 2026. The general contractor for the Bushehr-2 project is ASE JSC. Iran is trying to maintain a favorable balance of relations with Russia, pursuing a restrained policy in the Balkans, Central Asia (Tajikistan), Afghanistan, Syria and the Caucasus.

The main results of the close Iranian-Russian strategic cooperation were:

- 1) the US plan to establish control over Eurasia has not been implemented;
- 2) there was a change in the balance of power between the West and the East. Russia and Iran have changed the geopolitical and military-strategic situation in the region. The US failed to establish full control over the Middle East;
- 3) attempts of coup d'état in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan were prevented;
- 4) the plan of the US and NATO to establish pro-American regimes in the South Caucasus and send troops to the Caspian zone was thwarted;
- 5) armed aggression against Iran has been prevented;
- 6) organized joint defense of the Syrian state;
- 7) prerequisites for the restoration of Islamic civilization and its Arab core have been created;
- 8) the process of returning refugees from Syria and Iraq and restoring statehood has been launched.

This positive backlog of Iranian-Russian strategic cooperation requires increased efforts, as the world situation is becoming more complicated. The visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Tehran in July 2022 once again confirms that Russia has partners interested in cooperation in the region. During the working visit, Vladimir Putin met with Iranian Rahbar Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. A whole range of important regional and global problems was discussed – the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime, as well as economic cooperation. Ambitious infrastructure projects have been discussed with Iran, including the North-South route, which involves the creation of a large land transport corridor from Russia to the Persian Gulf and India (10).

The visit resulted in the signing of 8 bilateral Russian-Iranian agreements on cooperation in the field of transit transportation, science and culture, sports, energy, agriculture and trade and economic exchange. For example, Iran's oil company signed a \$40 billion deal with Russia's state gas company Gazprom. The deal provides for the development of gas fields on the Iranian island of Kish, the development of the Iranian oil fields "North Pars" and "South Pars", as well as the development of 6 other oil fields, the exchange of gas, oil and gas products, the completion of LNG projects and the construction of export gas pipelines.

China

China is attracting the Iranian leadership as the most important political component of its policy in the Asian region, capable of helping not only to strengthen the Iranian economy and defense capability, but also to advance Iran's interests on the world stage.

There are common views between Iran and China on a multipolar model of the world order, in which there will be several centers of power linked by strategic partnership. It can be assumed that the model along the China-Iran-India-Russia axis can become such a framework for a new bloc of Asian countries. To counter US sanctions, Iranian officials see China's BRI (One Belt, One Road) initiative as an opportunity for greater integration into Western Asia. So, on March 25, 2021, an Iranian-Chinese agreement on comprehensive cooperation was signed in Tehran for a period of 25 years, for a total amount of \$400 billion. The agreement implies cooperation between countries in twenty different areas, including in the field of economy, politics and culture, as well as in the field of military cooperation and the development of the defense industry (Sciolino, 2006:18).

The main priorities of the Iran-China pact:

- ensure multi-billion investments in the economy and guarantees for the sale of Iranian oil outside the framework of sanctions or various market excesses;
- to create a zone free from dollar settlements and a cluster that has resource, technological, financial potential and is clearly anti-American in nature;
- is a key link in the Chinese BRI project, as its land and sea sections are combined. China gains strategic advantages in the global race with the US and the PLA becomes the guarantor of the security of transit routes;
- BRI is a unique opportunity for the Iranians, since the mega-project is one of the main foreign policy ambitions of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is likely to insist on its implementation as long as he is in power;
- No Gulf state or outside power can ignore China's growing role in the Gulf, and no Arab state can deal with China without considering the risks that the PRC could expand its military ties with Iran (13).

India

The main priorities of Iran's foreign policy towards India are:

- trade and economic cooperation in the areas of transport, metallurgy and energy, including nuclear, in the oil and gas and chemical industries;
- cooperation in cultural and religious relations - the Iranian authorities focus on the need to jointly counter the onslaught of Western lack of spirituality with the traditional humanistic values of Eastern civilizations and cultures, pointing to the antiquity of the Iranian and Indian states, their contribution to world culture and the traditionally important role that each of them played in the region and the world;
- cooperation in the field of combating the production and distribution of drugs at the regional level;
- cooperation in the field of defense industry.

Currently, India is interested in developing the infrastructure of the Iranian strategic port of Chabahar, the total cost of the project is \$150 million. This strategic port, located off the southeast coast of Iran, will provide India with an access route to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan. There are also plans to use the port of Chabahar in cargo transportation along the ITC "North-South".

Recently, there have been active negotiations between Iran and India on laying a gas pipeline from Iran to India. Two projects are being discussed: the first is the construction of an onshore gas pipeline 1,000 km long, which will pass through the territory of Pakistan; the second is laying a (direct) gas pipeline on the seabed, bypassing Pakistan. In connection with the existing tension in the Indo-Pakistani relations, India is leaning towards the sea version of the project. However, no final solution has yet been found.

Based on the above configuration of Iran's foreign policy, it is possible to present predictive scenarios for the development of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the short and medium term. Table 1 shows the conditions for the de-escalation of the situation around Iran in 2022. The predictive estimate was compiled based on the results of an online survey of experts using the Delphi method in February 2022.

115 people took part in the interviews. From: Kazakhstan – 15; Kyrgyzstan – 10; Tajikistan – 9; Turkmenistan – 6; Uzbekistan – 11; Belarus – 7; RF – 18, Georgia – 3; France – 3; Poland – 4; Spain – 5; Germany – 9; Great Britain – 7; Italy – 8.

Table 1.
Conditions for the de-escalation of the situation around Iran in 2022.

Nº	Terms	Assessment
1	The return of the US and Iran to the nuclear agreement and the lifting of sanctions against the oil and financial sectors of the Iranian economy.	Most likely
2	The Iranian government maintains internal political stability in the country.	Most likely
3	Unprovoked from Iran's regional adversaries.	Unlikely
4	Achievements an informal agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to resolve the conflict in Yemen.	Likely
5	Restoration of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia.	Unlikely
6	Maintaining the political status quo in Iraq and Syria	Likely
7	The Taliban government in Afghanistan suppresses terrorist activities and mass emigration from the country.	Likely
8	Creation of a security institution analogous to NATO in the Middle East region.	Unlikely

Source: Author's version of the Delphi online survey of experts in 2022.

Conclusion

The article revealed the image of modern Iran in the new architecture of international relations, how the state became universal, analyzed the basic principles of Iranian foreign policy. We reviewed my three author's predictive scenarios for the development of events around the JCPOA, analyzed relations with the Middle East, the Middle East, as well as the Caucasus region, the Central Asian countries, Iranian-Russian-Chinese-Indian relations. Based on the above configuration of Iran's foreign policy in this article, I tried to present predictive scenarios for the development of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the short and medium term, and we also considered Iran's political and economic interactions with the countries of the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia and assessed what is happening currently.

Lastly, I would like to assess the policy of NATO countries and their allies in the Middle East until 2025.

First. Given the current situation in Ukraine and the imposition of tough sanctions against Russia, including on the supply of energy resources, mineral fertilizers and other goods to Europe, US policy will be aimed at preventing an energy collapse in Europe.

Second. In the short and medium term, the United States will not be able to provide military support to someone, since the main emphasis on the distribution of military resources of NATO countries will be aimed at supporting the armed conflict in Ukraine and countering China in the Asia-Pacific region.

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