



(3)

IRAN-RUSSIA RELATIONS WITHIN THE NEW INTERNATIONAL SPACE

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ÖZET

Bugünkü dünya stratejik ortaklık güçlerinin böyle coğrafi, Rusya ve İran gibi bugün, bölgesel istikrar ve güvenlik için bir görünüm ile karşılıklı avantajlı ekonomik ve kültürel bir ortaklık geliştirilmesi için sağlayan bir ortam oluşturma sağlanmasında önemli bir rol büyük ve çok birbirine yakındır oynuyor. O da (özellikle bu çıkarları işbirliği iki devlet çıkarları ile uyumlu değildir eğer) diğer önemli siyasi blok, coğrafi olarak daha uzak, ama kendi çıkarlarını bölgede etkisini sınırlamak istiyor. Yazar görünümünde, Rus-İran stratejik bir ortaklık geliştirilmesi için bir önkoşul bunlar. Bu makalede arka plan, geçmişi ve geleceği İran ve Rusya ilişkileri olan (özellikle Rusya için önemli) büyük ölçüde genel jeopolitik durum Avrasya bölgesi, öncelikle Sovyet alana bağlı devletler arasındaki stratejik işbirliğinin geliştirilmesi üzerinde duruluyor.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В современном мире стратегическое партнерство держав, таких крупных и столь близких друг к другу географически, каковыми являются сегодня Иран и Россия, играет значительную роль в сфере обеспечения региональной стабильности и безопасности с целью создания благоприятной обстановки для развития взаимовыгодного экономического и культурного партнерства. Также оно имеет целью ограничить влияние других крупных политических блоков, географически более удаленных, но преследующих свои собственные интересы в данном регионе (особенно если эти интересы не согласуются с интересами двух сотрудничающих государств). На взгляд автора, именно в этом заключаются предпосылки для развития российско-иранского стратегического партнерства. В настоящей статье речь пойдет о предпосылках, истории и перспективах развития стратегического сотрудничества Ирана и России, государств, от взаимоотношений которых во многом зависит общая геополитическая обстановка в евразийском регионе, прежде всего, (что особенно важно для России) на постсоветском пространстве

Introduction

Morton Kaplan is a theorist of realism school who has put forth six models of historical and non-historical constructs for international system. His systemic looking to international relations and consideration of the system as the "Action System" can be conceived as a proper framework to analyze foreign policy of states. Among the models posited by Kaplan, "balance-of-power" and "loose bipolar system" are sorted out as historical systems and "tight bipolar system", "the hierarchical international system", "the unit veto international system", and "the universal international system" are classified as non-historical systems. Meanwhile, although no predominant paradigm about the current system of international relations has been denoted since Soviet Union collapse and scientists refer to presence of unipolar and/or single-multipolar systems, international transitions, particularly in the aftermath of Sep. 11, 2001, have observed the hegemonic power of

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United States as the single sample of hierarchical system in the world. United States' unilateral attacks to Iraq despite oppositions of many states of the world and even international organizations including United Nations Security Council (UNSC) can be considered as the proof of this claim. This transition has introduced a new era, in terms of power distribution manner and rules of the game, to the international system, because not only system construction but also actors' interaction trends are influenced determinately by the manner of power distribution among main actors. Hence, changed international system has changed actors' behavior, in turn.

Accordingly, relations among various states including Iran and Russia have been impressed drastically. Although, initially it seemed that the close relations between United States and Russia during war against terrorism and opposition of

Iran against Washington might affect on relations between Tehran and Moscow, later it was demonstrated that Putin's foreign policy was inconsistent with unilateral objectives of the White House. Thus, relations between Iran and Russia got improved intensely. With regard to influence of international system on relations between Iran and Russia, this substantial question is raised that, "what outlooks would be envisioned for relations between Iran and Russia in the new international space?" In answer to this question, the main hypothesis of the discussion has been posited as "Iran-Russia relations in the new international space enjoy both convergence and divergence indicators, so if the cooperation pivots of parties are intensified in a good manner, then convergence perspectives may be emerged." IRAN-Russia relations include complicated set of economic partnership, nuclear cooperation, energetic issues, saber-rattling and independence in interests and action and of course concerns of Russia about possible achievement of Iran to nuclear weapons¹⁹.

It sounds that Russia considers at least some main criteria and indicators in its relations with Iran. These criteria, which can determine position and policies of Russia against Iran and its nuclear program, are: For its relations with Iran, Russia is interested in strengthening cooperation with Iran in political and economic fields, Russia is not intended to lose participation chances in Iran's lucrative projects including cooperation in peaceful use of nuclear energy, Russia's policy against Iran and its nuclear program is determined by national interests on one hand and international norms and commitments of Moscow on the other hand. Certainly, relations amongst Russia and some other states, particularly USA and Israel, are very influential in this regard, Cooperation of Russia with Iran in the field of nuclear energy drastically depends on Iran's allegiance from peaceful nuclear programs as well as fulfilling international commitments about non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Iran's accessibility to nuclear weapons is not Russia's intention not a bit, and Russia tries its best to prevent "proliferation" of nuclear weapons by the regional states.²⁰

It is completely obvious, because Russian officials concern that if Iran access to nuclear weapons then their national security may be menaced by this state. In other words, they analyze possible access of Iran to nuclear weapons as a menace against national security of Russia. While possible accessibility to nuclear weapons actually is not equal to threat this state by Iran. In fact, threat from Russia is not the incentive of Iran to move toward construction and production of nuclear weapons, but the main reason to do such is presence of nuclear Pakistan as its neighbor and also Israel in the Middle East along with efforts of other states of the region to be equipped to nuclear weapons. However, some

¹ حسین سیف زاده، نظریه ها و تئوریهای مختلف در روابط بین الملل فردی - جهانی شد: مناسبات و کارامدی تهران: انتشارات وزارت امور خارجه، 1384، ص 254

²⁰ Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics, Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley,



believe that any suspicion change in politic power and/or regime of Iran may result in hostility between Russian Federation and Iran. In such condition Iran's nuclear missiles can be a threat against national security of Russia.

Hence, policy of Russia in Iran's nuclear topic is neither **based** on supporting USA nor **supporting** Iran **but** it is designed to **support** interests of **Russian** people²¹. **Russia position against** Iran is **based** on necessity of preventing from violence and even threat of using military force against Iran. Moscow knows that US cannot attack against Iran and makes unstable the condition of the Near East whenever diplomatic process is **continued**, so Russians believe that Iran must cooperate with the world society further actively. However, though Russia is not interested in Iran's accessibility to nuclear weapons, if the Iran accesses to such weapons someday, Moscow prefers to be friend of Tehran instead of considered as its enemy.²²

Therefore, although the above-mentioned remarks show that the current interests of Russia **and** Iran have not sufficient stability in order to be used for building a strategic alliance, it should be note that Russians acknowledge the importance and weight of 72-million Iran, so they use their whole capacity to maintain non-proliferation of nuclear weapons treaty in order to keep intact positive inclination within Russia-Iran relations. At the same time, it **sounds** reasonable if the necessary level of these relations is called "cautious partnership"

While some officials in Tehran emphasize that interests of Iran never have been considered by Russian diplomats during bargains with western society and just have pursued their own interests, some Russian experts and politicians coin Moscow's approach to Tehran as generous, because already Russia frequently has vetoed intense sanctions against Iran.

On the other hand, some people in Tehran think that Moscow's bargains with western society in favor of Iran have not been generously, but Russia has used Iran's card to gain more scores from western society in other fields and aspects and there is not any meaningful relation between their "generous" behavior and Russia irresponsibility to its commitments to Iran including Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, S300 systems and aye (and not even blank vote) to three sanction resolutions against Iran.

Meanwhile, some other Russian analyzers expressed their worry about the possibility of improved relations of Iran and Western society, particularly with US. In their opinion, if Iran-west relations got improved, then the Russia will be the big loser of this game where will lose many of its interest in Iran. For instance if Iran embarks to conclude nuclear agreements with Germany one more time, then presence of Russia's nuclear industry in Iran will be pale.²³

Some Individuals like **Konstantin Kosachev**, chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, believe; "Current rulers of Iran cannot be safe and convenient partners for Russia. There are cases in which we try to convince Iran to change its method in order to maintain peaceful nuclear program without confliction with world society, but no sign of Iran's support for such remarks has been seen yet.

Nonetheless, United States politicians know very well that the result of intense and deep cooperation between Moscow and Tehran in various fields is a power politic-military

²² Olga Oliker, Keith Crane, Lowell H. Schwartz and Catherine Yusupov, Russian Foreign Policy; sources ad implications, published by RAND Corporation, 2009, p.114.

²³ Aleksandr Lukoyanov, "Iran: Vzgliad bez predubezhdeniya [Iran: a view without preconception], Rossiia v global'noy politike, vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 120-130.



alliance between two countries. It is a nightmare for United States; hence west would embark to correct its policy about Iran and Russia. For example when United States gave hands to Georgia in 2008, in response Russia announced that intends to develop its nuclear cooperation with Iran. Thus, it can be claimed that politic-military alliance of Iran and Russia is one of the most effective approaches to strike against interests of western states as they will be confined to revise about their aggressive policies against Tehran and Moscow.

As a result, the anticipations about development of nuclear cooperation between Iran and Russia will be confirmed in the coming future. Accordingly, Iran-Russia alliance can be a powerful factor in a condition in which the current configuration of powers is being changed in the international arena. Development of technical and military cooperation between Iran and Russia may lead to establishment of Russian military bases in Iran. East Azarbaijan Province and Qeshm Island in Persian Gulf are the best centers for establishment of Russia armies, since military base in East Azarbaijan Province allows Russia to control situation in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey and presence at Persian Gulf will bring an unprecedented possibility to control performance of United States and NATO in Persian Gulf Region, Iraq and other Arabian States.²⁴

On the other hand, Moscow and Tehran will harvest double profits from development of their nuclear cooperation. Russia is well informed about nuclear market of Iran and predicts its development in the several next years. It can be very lucrative for Russian Federation in the future. While Iran needs to Russia's experience in this regard. Therefore, consolidation of close relations between Iran and Russia inevitably will result in political consistency of then in the energy-based industries. It cannot be a pleasant fact for EU members which fear from more dependency to Russia now. It is understandable that at the current time, the agreements amongst EU states will be enhanced and their tendency to follow US policies against Russia in Caucasian region and against Iran in the Middle East will decrease drastically.²⁵

Accordingly, under approaching Iran and Russia policy Moscow can accelerate the procedure of admission of Iran in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Russia can bring Iran under technical-military umbrella of SCO. Undoubtedly, admission of Iran in this organization will be in favor of many members of SCO. Because Iran is able to direct many resources including financial resources through Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)- which Iran is its key operator- to Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

At the same it should keep in mind that, close relations between Iran and Russia will result in deep concerns in western states, particularly USA, so United States may try to press Russia through attracting Ukraine and Georgia as new members to NATO, ventilation in Caucasian region by Georgia, attracting Azerbaijan and then Armenia to western political-military bloc.

Similarly, more possibly, United States and its European allies will encounter Iran to more difficulties through more economic sanctions and flaming secessionism spirit in different nations; meanwhile it is possible that US stimulate Israel to Bombard nuclear installations of Iran. Furthermore, a new wave of fake news in media aiming at making disputation between Moscow and Tehran is not inspectable.

Therefore, despite some difficulties, Russia and Iran are considered as potential partners and allies in terms of economic, commercial bilateral relations and regional

²⁴ Tatyana Shakleyina and Aleksei Bogaturov, "The Russian Realist School of International Relation". Communist and Post Communist Studies.No. 37(1), March 2004, p. 45

²⁵ IV.Morozov, "Putin's Westernization and the Future of Russia's Relations with Europe". Policy Memos. Helsinki. The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2002, p. 70



cooperation, as some people in both states stress on strategic alliance and postulate this fact as a grand outlook for Tehran and Moscow which is achievable under mutual cooperation.²⁶

Anyway, Iran-Russia cooperation in the new international space owns some aspects of cooperation in Central Asia, Caucasasia and Caspian Sea.

Conclusion

Iran-Russia Relations always have been impressed by international factors, as such relations have been influenced either by structure of international system or by powerful operators and superpowers who have acted as other wings of Tehran-Moscow relations. USA can be observed clearly as the bigwig of this scene in both previous terms and contemporary era. Hence, consideration of cooperation pivots and fields between both parties and international factors which play active and of course destructive roles in these relations is imperative during analysis of Iran-Russia relations in the new international space in aftermath of 09/11. Accordingly, the effective set of factors on Iran-Russia relations indicates that Iran and Russia not only can be good partners, but also they can become potential rivals. In other words, "Iran-Russia relations in the new international space enjoy both convergence and divergence indicators, so if the cooperation pivots of parties are intensified in a good manner, then convergence perspectives may be emerged."

(علی رضا نوری' تحولات مفهوم امریکا سنتیزی در سیاست خارجی روسیه پس شوروی (با تمرکز بر دور ه پوتین. 1²⁶ فصلنامه مطالعات راهبردی . س 11 ش 42 صص 864-870 6