



# GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION OF IRAN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY

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Article history:	Abstract:
<b>Received:</b> January 20 <sup>th</sup> 2023 <b>Accepted:</b> February 22 <sup>th</sup> 2023 <b>Published:</b> March 26 <sup>th</sup> 2023	The article analyzes the features of the political system of Iran and the geopolitical situation at the beginning of the 21st century, its evolution under the influence of changes in the internal situation in the country and external factors that had a multidirectional effect on the processes of modernization. Contradictory trends within the political system and other vectors of the Iranian leadership's strategy in the field of regional policy are being studied.
<b>Keywords:</b> Middle East, geo-economics, clergy, Persian Gulf, ideology, pension, political process, sanction, separatists, protests, revolution, religion, export.	

As a result of the revolution of 1979, in a country with ancient traditions of monarchism, a theocratic regime was established with a peculiar form of government. In some Islamic countries, attempts have also been made to combine modern, or secular, principles of government with the principles of Islam. But only Iran managed to practically establish Islamic rule. After the February revolution of 1979, which ousted the Shah's regime, and after the general referendum on April 1, 1979, in which they voted in favor of the creation of an Islamic republic, there were long fierce disputes in the country about how the system of power in the newly proclaimed republic should be practically organized.

Iran, from the point of view of studying the relationship between state and ideological priorities, is a unique object of study. The geopolitical importance of Iran in the region is very high. Iran plays 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. Iran occupies the most important military-strategic position, at the same time it is washed by the waters of the Persian and Oman gulfs of the Indian Ocean.

In February 1979, the monarchy that had existed there for more than two and a half thousand years was overthrown, and republican Islamic rule was established. The state system that was formed as a result of the revolution was built on the principles of Islam in its Shiite interpretation. Such an interpretation of the Shiite dogmas received wide support from the population. This was the first experience of building a theocratic Shiite state in the history of the 20th century. Iran seeks to play one of the key roles in the Near and Middle East, to claim the role of a regional leader.

In the XX century. Three attempts were made in Iran to weaken "absolute" power and strengthen republican

tendencies, but they failed. At the beginning of the last century, constitutional reforms led to the establishment of the despotic regime of Shah Reza Pahlavi (1925-1941). The struggle for democratization and for the nationalization of oil in the early 1950s ended with the strengthening of the power of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-1979). The consequence of the anti-Shah revolution in 1979 was the establishment of "the absolute rule of the velayate faqih." It is especially worth emphasizing that the additions "confirmed the invariance of such provisions as the republican system, the system of" velayate-e faqih "and reliance on the voice of the people."

Political ideology plays a decisive role in the political life of Iran. As the main legacy of the Islamic revolution of 1979, the activity of the highest Iranian clergy, which has a direct influence on the leadership of the country, is currently. The development and application of ideological norms proceeds in a strictly defined way with a significant bias towards conservative mindsets.

In recent years, despite the US economic sanctions, the controversial attitude towards the country in the world, internal problems, Iran has managed to maintain the internal integrity and stability of the state regime. Iran not only exists, but is developing quite successfully in the difficult conditions of a kind of confrontation and competition with the US world leader. Over the past two decades, Iran has become one of the most influential powers in the Middle East region.

All pain points in the region, one way or another, are associated with Iran. All seemingly purely internal problems of certain parts of the region, be they ethnic or religious, military or economic, the problems of refugees and the drug business, the problems of terrorism and separatism can be effectively resolved only with the assistance of Iran. At the same time, even during the Islamic Revolution, some



representatives of the higher Shiite clergy, who shared the ideas of Islamic modernism, advocated limiting the religious component in political life, but while maintaining the Islamic regime.

The modern political process taking place in Iran with its unique state-political structure is one of the rare precedents for the development of society. The possibility of such a political process and the existence of such a device in modern conditions turned out to be quite real and viable. The very structure of power, state bodies, the interaction of power and society in Iran are of very significant research interest. Unfortunately, the practice of existence, which is different from the usual stereotypes of the state-political structure of Iran, especially at the present stage, has not been sufficiently studied by Iranian specialists.

As evidenced by the facts, the conservatism of Iranian society, the religious traditions that have taken root in it, as well as the lack of organizational opportunities for truly free activities of parties under the current regime, make the process of transforming the political system of "Islamic rule" protracted, accompanied by fluctuations in the authorities when pursuing a principled course.

Such a one-sided, incomprehensible interpretation of the phenomenon of modern Islamic revivalism is unjustified, since it does not reflect the fullness of the specifics of the political processes of the Islamic state. It is an undeniable fact that in most Muslim countries and communities, Islamization is predominantly expressed in the legal, cultural and moral sphere and by no means consists in the rejection of the secular state system.

At a time when, in the course of political changes taking place in a number of Arab countries in the Middle East, the question of finding ways for further development was raised, the idea arose in the Iranian establishment to promote its own model. According to Iranian political scientists, the system of power created in the country is a religious democracy.

Iran, in terms of geopolitics, is the heart of the Middle East. The Near and Middle East is the historical homeland of Islam and the traditional area for the formation of Muslim culture. Located between the Caucasus and the Indian Ocean, it is the strategic foothold, the possession of which allows you to control the Gulf, the Caspian, Afghanistan, and Pakistan at the same time. In addition, the Strait of Hormuz, which is the main artery in the Arab oil transportation system, is almost entirely located in the territorial waters of Iran.

It is a critical element in the US energy security system. In the event that this waterway is blocked, which has already happened, approximately 40% of the supply of all oil exports in the world may be in jeopardy. At present, the available alternative routes for transporting oil from the region are capable of covering a maximum of 53% of the total volume of tanker transit through the strait.

In Iran, the level of corruption is very high, which hinders the development of entrepreneurship that is not associated with state structures. In the 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index, Iran ranked 133rd out of 176 countries. Of course, as early as 2008, the global financial crisis began to have a significant impact on the economic situation, but this impact was expressed only in a slight slowdown in growth rates.

It is possible that the easing of US pressure on China, Japan and India in connection with the import of Iranian oil, which was discussed in the US on the eve of the elections in Iran, will improve the situation, but it is indisputable that sanctions have made the situation extremely difficult. At the same time, as already mentioned, the country's leadership pays great attention to the issues of social protection of the population, especially raising the living standards of the poorest strata. The social security system is well developed, the level of the minimum wage is constantly increasing, from which social benefits are calculated. There has been a qualitative change in life even in the lowest groups of the population - especially among the city dwellers, who have access to all basic public services.

In order to implement the principle of Islamic justice, various programs are being implemented for the participation of the population in various economic projects. The current pension system provides pensioners with a fairly decent standard of living. The minimum pension is equal to the minimum wage, or about 70% of the national average wage. Support provided to the population is provided through various Islamic institutions, including Islamic foundations and waqfs.

According to various estimates, the number of only officially operating religious and public charitable foundations in the country is about 3,000. Significant funds are invested in education and health care. In 2009-2010 spending on education amounted to about 5% of GDP (and almost 20% of all budget spending). Iran's Human Development Index is growing faster than global and regional. By now, it is the socio-economic situation that can be considered as a decisive factor, under the influence of which the new leadership will obviously make concessions on the



nuclear program, which can soften the sanctions regime of the United States and the West as a whole. It seems, however, that in the short and even medium term the country's economy is able to withstand the isolation regime. The national economy is capable of providing a viable, if not high, level of consumption. And the ideological opposition to an external enemy, which deprives Iran of its legal right to develop nuclear energy, is very great. None of the political organizations, including opposition parties, questions the course towards the development of the nuclear program.

Nevertheless, Iranian society, under the influence of economic difficulties, is set to change, including in the field of socio-economic policy. The further development of the Iranian economy, especially its raw materials industries based on large reserves of oil and gas, largely depends on relations with the world, on relationships with the economies of countries that not only import energy resources, but also export advanced technologies. Iranian oil has always been an instrument of serious political pressure.

A special place in the Muslim world, according to political scientists from many countries of the world, is occupied by the countries of the Persian Gulf, and especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar, since the aggravation of contradictions contributes to the deepening of contradictions between Shiites and Sunnis, undermines the strength and unity of the Islamic world. In the context of the desire to overcome the contradictions between these countries and Iran, it can be seen as progress in bilateral relations.

Iranian representatives often speak in favor of reconsidering the nature of bilateral relations between Tehran and Doha, and draws attention to the need to resolve the Syrian crisis without foreign intervention, through nationwide negotiations, while maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. This suggests that Iran is looking for ways of rapprochement with Arab countries on issues of Iranian-Arab relations.

At the same time, Iran's policy towards the countries of the Central Asian region in general and the CIS countries in particular Uzbekistan is unlikely to undergo significant changes and will have a significant impact on Uzbek-Iranian relations. Iran buys mineral fertilizers, steel, kaolin and many goods from Uzbekistan. There are four dozen Iranian-Uzbek joint ventures.

The national interests of Uzbekistan related to maintaining stability in neighboring regions, especially with Iran, require the establishment of the broadest political, economic and cultural cooperation. A

pragmatic approach to developing relations with Iran and with other countries of the Arab East can contribute to the inflow of capital from the Gulf countries into the economy of Uzbekistan.

The experience of Iran and the countries of the Arab East in the development and implementation of regional security programs in the context of globalization, which is characteristic of the modern world, seems to be very useful in the light of the need to ensure security and stability in Central Asia. It seems expedient to develop, first of all, economic and cultural relations, create favorable conditions for investing in the economy of Uzbekistan the financial resources of Iran and other countries of the Arab East for the implementation of mutually beneficial projects in the field of transport communications, the oil industry, etc. Meanwhile, Iran is the only country in Central Asia that has direct access to the sea and ocean in the north and south. This determines its ability to export oil to the foreign market. At present, the geo-economic importance of Iran pleases everyone. Iran has 10% of the world's oil reserves and 15% of the world's gas reserves. In terms of proven oil reserves, Iran ranks 3rd-4th in the world.

The events in Iran after September 16, 2022, related to the death of Mahsa Amini, who was allegedly beaten in Tehran by law enforcement agencies, gave a new impetus to distrust in the government and protests and riots began in the country against the political system of Iran. After that, women, university students and even schoolgirls took to the streets, protesting against the arbitrariness of the authorities. Demonstrations were generally peaceful, with women and girls taking off their headscarves and burning them in the streets, shouting anti-government slogans and confronting law enforcement forces.

Thus, it should be emphasized that Iran will continue to be at the center of events in the Middle East, retain the status of a center of attraction for the Shiites and a contender for a leading role in the region. Real changes in foreign policy may come under the influence of a regime of economic and financial sanctions that will lead to an economic crisis of such magnitude that a change in foreign policy becomes inevitable.

The experience of the countries of the Arab East and Iran in the development and implementation of regional security programs in the context of globalization, which is characteristic of the modern world, seems to be very useful in the light of the need to ensure security and stability in Central Asia. We hope that for Iran and other Arab states Uzbekistan is of great interest as one of the centers of "Muslim



culture", cooperation in the field of humanitarian scientific research should be intensified and cooperation in the field of scientific and cultural tourism should be developed.

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