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IMPACT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON PEACE AND STABILITY IN SOUTHWEST ASIA

This article seeks to move beyond today's highly antagonistic Russian-American relationship and imagine what that relationship might look like in 2030. The first part of the article describes the global trends of the next decade that may affect Russian-American relations and American interests in Russia in the Southwest Asian region. The second part suggests how these conditions, together with domestic political factors, may affect the strategic directions of American and Russian foreign policy in the Southwest Asian region. Finally, the final section provides an overview of U.S. goals and priorities in this relationship across a comprehensive, but not exhaustive, set of issues.

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Introduction

Socio-economic situation

The socio-economic situation in Iran remains tense. Due to the lack of objective data, it is difficult to assess the public mood, so it is necessary to refer to individual examples of the expression of dissatisfaction or, on the contrary, the support of the population to the government.

On the eve of the full implementation of US sanctions and other countries joining them, social and economic pressures are seriously felt in Iran. There is a perception in Tehran that structural problems hurt the economy more than sanctions, and that while the latter exacerbate existing problems, they are not the root cause of them. But it will be more difficult to reform the system in the context of the restoration of full sanctions pressure.

By March 2018, oil export revenues of about 2.5 million barrels per day reached \$47 billion, almost \$5 billion more than the pre-JCPOA level [6]. In fact, it was precisely due to the increase in oil exports that the jump in Iran's GDP growth to 12.5% occurred only in the first year after the implementation of the "nuclear deal" (2016). In the medium term, since his first election campaign, President Rouhani has set a target of a steady 8% growth over the five years following the resolution of the nuclear crisis.

Analysts of the Research Center under the Iranian Parliament noted that after all the upheavals, the country embarked on the path of economic growth and in the last Iranian year (2017-2018) it was 3.7%, including hydrocarbon exports, and 4.6% without exports. o [7]. And while that would mean faster growth in non-oil exports, that growth could also drop to zero.

The situation in the economy actually stabilized more or less in 2015-2018. But after the sanctions, the financial resources that could be used to grow the economy were practically non-existent, and the foreign investment necessary for the industrial and mining sectors was reluctant.

On the eve of the return of American sanctions, not only new capital did not enter the Iranian market, but old capital also left. For example, in August, the French company Total left its participation in the South Pars gas field development project [8]. Today, Iran hopes that this niche will be filled by China, especially the state-owned company CNPC, whose participation in the project could increase to 80%.

In August 2018, two ministers of economy and labor were removed from their positions in a vote due to growing internal political tensions. The main complaints against the Minister of

Economy are tax regulation, problems in the banking system, and in general, his inability to cope with the growing economic problems. This happened shortly after Iranian bazaars in various cities did not open shops collectively, protesting against the unfavorable economic situation and the virtual inability to generate income from their activities.

On the eve of the sanctions, the national currency also fell to a record level. So, if one US dollar was equal to 40 thousand rials in March 2018, in October it broke the relative record equal to 200 thousand rials and fell to 110 thousand rials at the end of November. In some materials as noted, "According to the Iranians themselves, the devaluation of the national currency increased exporters' income in rial terms by 600%, which also means an increase in treasury receipts." In reality, private business was severely affected by the collapse of the Iranian rial and the difference between the government and "private" or "street" dollar exchange rates. The need to carry out import operations through accounts in state banks led to the fact that goods were purchased in dollars at the "free" exchange rate (which is two to three times higher than the regulated state level), and income was returned to businessmen in Iranian rials at the state exchange rate. This does not count all the previous problems - customs issues and payment issues - faced by a private business that has to do any transactions with foreign partners. For example, although Iran formally rejoined the SWIFT system and even made demonstrative payments, in reality the business could not take advantage of it, because there were not many European banks willing to cooperate and mediate with Iranian banks.

According to current forecasts, including the Iranians themselves, because of American sanctions, Iran's oil exports could fall back below one million barrels per day, which would mean a 2% recession. While the EU is discussing a special financial mechanism for interaction with Iran, traditional importers of Iranian hydrocarbons, such as China [9], which ranks first in terms of volume, or India, which ranks second, have reason to doubt their capabilities. to withstand US pressure [10]. Under these conditions, the ability to at least somehow

compensate for the losses related to the decrease in export volumes will depend on the price of oil. The US made an exception to the Iranian port of Chekhbehar, an important point of the North-South transport corridor, in order to ensure the construction of the railway and, accordingly, the delivery of goods to Afghanistan [11], but by the way, it is not yet known what concessions Washington will be willing to give to India, which is part of the said corridor. not.

By the beginning of autumn of 2018, the increase in consumer prices reached 31.4% on average, of which 46.5% was the share of food products [12]. Mass media have reported shortages of certain types of goods, such as children's clothing. It has become difficult to buy imported drugs that have no analogues in Iran. The typical situation is not a complete shortage of drugs, but a storage of some substances in case of need or waiting for the normalization of the situation.

The Iranian Majlis Research Center concluded that structural problems are more damaging to Iran's economy than sanctions, and that while the latter exacerbate existing problems, they are not the root cause of them. The structural problems of the economy, in turn, are not new and are related to the large share of the public sector, patronage of some industries, rampant corruption and nepotism, large bureaucratic and informal spending on an inefficient administrative apparatus. Of course, reforming the system will become more difficult in the context of the restoration of full-fledged sanctions pressure.

December - January 2017-2018. and in 2018, a wave of protests swept the cities, often causing economic problems. For example, in June 2018, demonstrations were held in Tehran against the rise in prices of goods and the depreciation of the Iranian rial, and in July in Isfahan, Karaj and Rasht against price increases, inflation and unemployment. While the ultra-conservatives tried to paint the situation as Rouhani's government's failure to handle the crisis and, moreover, the wrong decision in negotiations with the United States, during the protests, along with demands for economic order, the curses increased. It was heard not against the president of Iran, but against its spiritual leader.

In terms of social order, 2018 is notable for the continued efforts of activists to challenge the compulsory wearing of the hijab. The previous "My Secret Freedom" campaign, in which many women posted videos of themselves removing their mandatory hijab, was followed by another popular campaign, "Girls of Englab Street". Individual participants of this action stood on the street holding the scarves they took from their heads as flagpoles; As time went by, there was less and less talk about the repetition of the action, but there were more and more ordinary women who deliberately threw off their hijabs on the streets of Iran. Judging by the loyal reaction of the authorities to the later, more liberal attitude towards the hijab, the decision to relax moral control against the background of the worsening economic situation was a conscious one.

Sanctions

On May 8, 2018, D. Trump decided to unilaterally withdraw from the JCPOA. American sanctions were partially lifted on the night of August 7, and a second, tougher one targeting the country's energy and financial sectors - the Central Bank of Iran, the Atomic Energy Organization and Iran - went into effect on November 5, 2018. Air (a total of more than 700 legal and natural persons) [1]. Iran's SWIFT system has also been disconnected.

During the election campaign, criticism of the JCPOA was heard from the future president of the United States, and the withdrawal from the agreement was mainly due to domestic American political reasons. At the same time, since the JCPOA did not address the real causes of tensions in Iran-American relations, but rather briefly removed some symptoms, certain problems were expected in its implementation.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the reimposition of sanctions on November 5 should force Iran to make a choice - "continue to struggle to keep its economy afloat or to squander precious resources abroad - there is not enough power for both" [2]]. In essence, the sanctions are aimed more at the gradual erosion of the Iranian regime, which is trying to strike a balance between domestic political problems and regional ambitions. Sanctions against the

main sources of income of the Iranian budget are designed to facilitate this.

Iran's advantage this time in the case of repeated sanctions is due to its moral superiority, because the JCPOA was closely monitored by Tehran and Washington was the first to withdraw from it without legal reason. Predominance can end morally.

Fortunately for Iran, considering that the negotiations on the EU nuclear program have been ongoing since 2003, the "nuclear agreement" is considered an important achievement of diplomacy towards Iran. In addition, the Eurotroika insistence on protecting the agreement is an attempt to show. Independence of the EUU.S. pressure and developing their own financial institutions to carry out the necessary operations. The EU announced its readiness to make every effort to preserve the agreement and expressed its readiness to support Iran, including through the creation of a special mechanism for mutual settlements after the return of American sanctions [3]. However, the political determination of European leaders does not guarantee that the scheme, acting as a clearing house, will help attract small and medium-sized businesses to the Iranian market beyond the actual export of Iranian hydrocarbons to Europe.

At the same time, while succeeding simultaneously in putting pressure on Iran's economy and the lives of ordinary people, sanctions against Tehran in its 40-year history have been ineffective in adjusting Iran's regional politics. has been proven. Thus, after the introduction of the so-called "crippling" sanctions in 2012, Iran even expanded its regional presence, the conflict with Riyadh worsened, and the influence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on foreign and domestic politics increased. In 2006, Iran's nuclear crisis only increased.

The US withdrawal from the JCPOA has led to bolder statements and Tehran's policies in general. This is partly due to the release of assets frozen during the sanctions period, and partly due to the disappearance of hopes that Washington will return as a participant in the "nuclear deal".

In July 2018, on the eve of the first phase of the return of US sanctions, the rhetoric between Iran and the US heated up - D. Trump promised "unprecedented" consequences if President Rouhani dared to threaten the US again [4]; General Qassem Soleimani, head of the Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, complained about the American president's "cabaret" rhetoric and Washington's inability to successfully carry out military campaigns that have already taken place, not to mention Iran [5]. In fact, much of the old Iranian-American relationship and effective sanctions have returned, but with a number of other variables – Iran's support from the European Union and perhaps less stable positions of Iran's ruling elite.

Abroad participation in military campaigns

On February 18, 2018, Iran's spiritual leader Ali Khamenei defined his foreign policy priorities as follows: "In foreign policy, we prioritize East over West, neighbors over non-regional players, countries. who shares our vision over others" [13]. The "Look East" policy stems organically from the failure of attempts to establish normal relations with the generalized West even after the agreement on the JCPOA. Syria remains one of the traditional "eastern" directions of Iranian politics.

After the end of the civil war in Syria, Tehran held a series of consultations with Damascus regarding post-war cooperation. It should be noted that Iran has invested heavily in keeping the government of Bashar al-Assad loyal to Tehran under control, and for security reasons cannot allow the state, which is essentially the only ally in the region, to fall under the control of unfriendly players. In August 2018, an agreement on military-technical cooperation was signed between Brigadier General Amir Hatami and his Syrian counterpart Ali Abdulla Ayyub. Khatami announced the expansion of bilateral cooperation in the military field and, most importantly, that "Iranian military advisers will remain in Syria" [14].

At the same time, Iran's domestic economic and political problems do not match Tehran's ambitions to strengthen its position in Syria under agreements not only in the military sector, but also in the reconstruction of infrastructure - electricity networks and communications, as

well as energy networks and communications. because the latter requires serious financial investments.

Various calculations according to , for the restoration of Syria 500 billion dollars will be required, and Tehran must cover at least part of it to exert economic influence, while the EU is adamantly unwilling to provide any funding while retaining the government. Bashar al-Assad and the presence of Iran, but Iran itself still had to reduce spending on regional "charity" in exchange for political influence. Thus, it was decided to stop providing free electricity and water to neighboring Iraq. With the onset of the civil war, the military-strategic dimension of Iran's presence and assistance to Syria took precedence over subsequent claims for the economic pie. In this regard, particularly radical statements have emerged that Syria is practically Iran's 35th province, and if you choose between Syria or your own province, Khuzestan, the former will be strategically more important. for example Mehdi Tayeb. , linked to the ultra-conservative Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi, commander of the Iranian political Amar group). In another domestic economic situation, President Rouhani's statements regarding public spending on military personnel salaries in Iraq and Syria, as well as on military equipment [5] necessary for combat operations, can be seen as national pride. Meanwhile, according to the information of Israeli intelligence, which are only approximate figures, about 82 thousand fighters are under the control of Iran in Syria, of which 60 thousand are Syrian soldiers, 10 thousand are from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, and 9 thousand are from Lebanon. Hezbollah and 3,000 - from its units of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (SEPAH) [6]. Considering Iran's internal problems, these costs do not seem insignificant, and it is enough to justify the strategic importance of Syria to ensure Iran's own security for the Iranian people.

As Assad's forces began to regain control of most of the country with Russia's involvement, Iran became seriously concerned about taking practical steps to consolidate itself in Syria in the post-war period.

However, in recent months, during official visits, Iran not only talked about large-scale

agreements, but apparently also discussed specific measures. The use of national currencies in mutual settlements, the creation of joint enterprises and the involvement of Baghdad as a third equal partner in these relations [7], including by connecting the railways of the three countries - Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri and the Minister of Economy and Trade Muhammad Samer al- Khalil had spoken. In August, another Iranian delegation reached an agreement in the Syrian capital to involve Iranian private companies in the construction of 30,000 residential buildings in Syria, [8] and in late August, Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami discussed arms supplies with his counterparts. Restoration of military equipment and production in Syria.

Tehran may have been partly encouraged by Moscow, which has announced a number of bilateral agreements, to consider non-military aspects of its interaction with Damascus. In February, Ayatollah Khamenei's military advisor Rahim Safavi said that Iran intends to continue its efforts to "protect the territorial integrity" of Syria. He mentioned, among other things, the extraction of phosphates, which Damascus has contracted with Moscow, not Tehran, for the next 50 years [9].

Relations with Russia

After the deterioration of relations with the United States, Russia is less and less prepared to influence Iran's regional politics and focuses more on expanding relations with Iran itself.

However, despite the efforts of officials to call Russian-Iranian relations strategic, 2018 also passed under Moscow's mistrust in Iran. This was partly due to the perception of competition in Syria, Moscow's attempt to maintain a balance between Iran and Israel, commitment to OPEC's plans to increase oil exports, as well as the development of the situation around the Caspian Sea.

Chairman of the Security Committee of the Iranian Parliament, Heshmetullah Falahat-Pishe, said that Iran's foreign policy should be reconsidered "because it has become a toy in the hands of Russia." He also called Russia's policy against Iran "exploitation" [3]. The statement was made immediately after the OPEC summit, where Russia and Saudi Arabia agreed to

increase the share of oil exports to the market by a million barrels. Iran's demand for OPEC to show solidarity ahead of the upcoming sanctions has essentially gone unheard. However, not everyone agrees with Fallakhat-Pisha. For example, Ali-Akbar Vilayati, the spiritual leader's adviser on foreign policy issues, said that Tehran should stick to China and Russia while commenting on the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA. Vilayati believes that the latter does not have enough resources to put pressure on Iran, and besides, Tehran has of late received everything it once demanded from Moscow.

Another factor of discontent in Tehran was Moscow's balancing position between Iran and Israel in the Syrian conflict. In particular, when it comes to Russia's ability to "convince" Iran to withdraw its armed forces and those of its allies from the border with Israel.

From this point of view, it makes sense to develop public diplomacy in the direction of Iran. Changing the negative perception of Russia in Iran will require effort and time, and meetings at the interstate level alone cannot solve this problem.

After the imposition of sanctions in November, Vladimir Putin held a meeting with the permanent members of the Russian Security Council, where he emphasized the "illegal nature" of the US actions to restore sanctions against Iran. By the way, the only bank in Russia whose shareholder is the National Bank of Iran ("Melli Bank"), "Mir Business Bank", which has been operating since 2002, has also been subject to sanctions due to the issue with the Iranian ambassador in Moscow [11], where the US sanctions against Iran were reinstated. The "illegal character" of his actions was emphasized.

Moscow is likely to defend the JCPOA on diplomatic fronts, consistent with its assumed role as a neutral proponent of compliance with international norms and agreements. However, if the goal is indeed to bring relations with Iran closer to strategic status, then serious consideration should be given to how to stimulate trade - focusing on customs cooperation and mutual settlement methods.

Moscow and Tehran are rivals when it comes to agreements to restore Syrian infrastructure and access to resources. They can act as allies in possible diplomatic efforts to get the consent of European institutions and businesses to finance their contracts for various projects. Two countries under international sanctions and a war-torn third country clearly do not have the resources to handle this process on their own. In this sense, it is difficult to give any recommendation that in the case of Syria, Russia takes into account only the opinion of Iran, therefore, these relations do not seem like a full partnership. However, Iran's ability to destabilize the region, even in an economically weakened state, and especially in Syria, remains one of the strong arguments for involving Tehran in cooperation in post-conflict settlement.

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**AMERİKA BİRLEŞİK ŞTATLARI VƏ RUSİYA FEDERASIYASI ARASINDAKI
MÜNASİBƏTLƏRİN CƏNB-QƏRBİ ASIYADA SÜLH VƏ SABİTLİYƏ TƏSİRİ**

Xülasə

Bu məqalədə bugünkü Rusiya-Amerika münasibətlərindən kənara çıxmağa və bu münasibətlərin 2030-cu ildə necə görünə biləcəyini təsəvvür etməyə çalışmışıq. Məqalənin birinci hissəsində Cənub-Qərbi Asiya regionunda Rusiya-Amerika münasibətləri və Rusiyadakı Amerika maraqlarına təsir göstərə biləcək növbəti onilliyin qlobal tendensiyaları təsvir edilir. İkinci hissə bu şərtlərin daxili siyasi amillərlə birlikdə Cənub-Qərbi Asiya regionunda Amerika və Rusiyanın xarici siyasətinin strateji istiqamətlərinə necə təsir göstərə biləcəyini təklif edir. Nəhayət, yekun bölmə hərtərəfli, lakin hərtərəfli olmayan məsələlər dəsti üzrə bu əlaqələrdə ABŞ-ın məqsədləri və prioritetlərinin icmalını təqdim edir.

Açar sözlər: Rusiya-Amerika münasibətləri, Asiya, siyasi dinamika

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**ВЛИЯНИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЙ США И РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ НА МИР И
СТАБИЛЬНОСТЬ В ЮГО-ЗАПАДНОЙ АЗИИ**

Резюме

В этой статье мы попытались выйти за рамки сегодняшних российско-американских отношений и представить, как эти отношения могут выглядеть в 2030 году. Первая часть статьи описывает российско-американские отношения в регионе Юго-Западной Азии и глобальные тенденции следующего десятилетия, которые могут повлиять на американские интересы в России. Вторая часть предполагает, как эти условия в сочетании с внутривнутриполитическими факторами могут повлиять на стратегические направления внешней политики Америки и России в регионе Юго-Западной Азии. Наконец, в заключительном разделе содержится обзор целей и приоритетов Соединенных Штатов в этих отношениях по комплексу всеобъемлющих, но не всеобъемлющих вопросов.

Ключевые слова: российско-американские отношения, Азия, политическая динамика.