NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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> *"Our national interest is not separate from our Islamic interest:*
> *These two phenomena are inseparable."*
> *-Leader of IRI Ali Khamenei*

The national security strategy of a given country is based on its national interests and is defined by taking into consideration geographic, historical, political and economic aspects of its past and present. The same is true about the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, what distinguishes it from the national security strategies of other countries is the religious ideology that shapes the "nation" and as a result, its "national security." Although IRI has never produced available documents of its National security strategy or Foreign policy doctrines, the history of the country's political behavior and current steps by the Iranian political and military actors provide a possibility to draw the main characteristics of its national security assumptions. In other words, "Iran's National security policy behavior must be understood in its discursive context."[1]

The national security strategy of Islamic Republic of Iran consists of different, sometimes contradictory assumptions of self-identity. Some researchers believe that Iran's current religio-political system constructs and maintains several identities. Namely:

- Iranian identity,
- Islamic identity,

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[1] ManshourVarasteh, "Understanding Iran's National security doctrine",UK, 2013, p.21 (01.05.2017)

- Shia identity, and
- Revolutionary identity.[2]

Although the supreme Leader of Islamic Republic of Iran has stated that "there is no national interest without Islamic interest", the analysis of the available documents and speeches by members of the political establishment of the country show that Iranian National interest is waved from not only Islamic, but also national, Shia', and Revolutionary identities of Iran.[3] These identities and identity-based interests are the main sources of Iran's national security strategies dimensions and its objectives.

After the establishment of the Islamic Republic as a result of Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran has adopted a constitution that is based on the ayatollah Khomeini's concept of Velayate Faghih.[4] This concept emphasizes the need of jurists' government in an age of big occultation of the imam Mahdi.[5] In this kind of government, the power structure is complicated and consists of several mutual supervisory bodies. As a result, the country's foreign and security strategies are being knitted and supervised in the different political, military, and religious structures.

Thus, for the foreign and security issues of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the responsible entities are the Office of the Leader, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Intelligent service, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard's Corps with its special unit named Quds Force, the conventional military of Iran, and the Supreme Council for National Security.[6]The latter, however, is the key national security and defense assessment body according to the constitution. The members of the council are ex-officio members and include the representatives of IRGC, the

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[2] Some researchers emphasize the "Persian" not "Iranian" identity, J .MatthewMclnnis, "The Future of Iran's security Policy", AEI, 2017, p.7, available at https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-Future-of-Irans-Security-Policy.pdf (10.07.2017)

[3] The name of the country "Islamic Republic of Iran" by itself expresses markers of two identities; the origins of other two are anchored in the constitution of the country.

[4] "Constitution of the Islamic Republic", Encyclopedia Iranica, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/constitution-of-the-islamic-republic (02.05.2017)

[5]"Islam in Iran vii. The concept of Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism", Encyclopedia Iranica,http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/islam-in-iran-vii-the-concept-of-mahdi-in-twelver-shiism (02.05.2017)

[6]Kevjn Lim, "National security decision-making in Iran", Open Briefing: The Civic Society Intelligence Agency, 2015, p.3 (06.05.2017)

Artesh, and the heads of three powers. Some members of the council join the council for the short-term for discussing certain issues. This body gathers meetings in order to discuss ongoing threats of the country and accepts resolutions.

For the conventional military of the IRI, the border of their responsibilities are the political borders of IRI, whereas the borders of IRGC are "the borders of Islamic revolution" and for the Leader of IRI protecting Iran's borders means protecting "the heart of Islamic world."

Although ayatollah Khomeini has said that "revolution was not about the price of watermelons," the economy of the country and its problems and challenges have a significant impact on the foreign and security policies of Iran, and economic growth and independence have become the top priorities of the country's leadership so far. In the 20 Year Development Plan of the country adopted in 2005, it is predicted that by the end of the implementation of the plan, "Iran would be a fully advanced country, rising to the number-one rank in economic, scientific, and technological progress among 28 nations in the Middle East and Southeast Asia."[7]

The Economy of Iran is not free from Islamic ideology, but the economy itself has a say on the Islamic Republic's strategy when implementing that ideology. Thus, in the first years of the Revolution, the isolation of the country and the Iraq-Iran war has weakened the country and the need to stop talking about the "exportation of the revolution" emerged. Furthermore, that aspect of the Khomeini ideology is a part of the constitution of the IRI; there is less and less proclamation of it in the Iranian politicians' public speeches. The situation became much tougher after the sanctions concerning the country's nuclear policy, and resulted in a victory of a political person with an electoral slogan that entailed "cooperation with the west."[8]

In order to understand the policy-making of IRI, and not to be lost in the different aspects of its identity driven interests, one must know about

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[7] متن سند نهايي چشم انداز بيست ساله جمهوري اسالمي ايران

https://vpb.um.ac.ir/images/192/stories/asnad-faradasti/sanad20.pdf (12.06.2017)
[8] Iranian president-elect Rouhani promises better relations with west https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/17/iran-hassan-rouhani-promises-moderation (10.06.2017)

the Shiite concepts adopted and widely used by Iranian political culture. Mansour Varesteh writes that "in spite of its religious-ideological nature, the decision-making process in the Islamic Republic is basically rational and pragmatic. It leans heavily on the Shiite concept of "maslahat" or "darurat" (public interest or necessities,) which allows for religious compromise according to a cost-benefit calculus. Ideological and religious constraints do exist, but they are subject to the basic pragmatism of Iranian political strategy."[9]This concept allows the government of IRI to have more maneuvering tools in Foreign policy, and gives the possibility to interchange the places of its different identities when dealing with one or another issue, threat, or achievement.

This pragmatism is a leading factor of Iran's foreign policy. Both in the region and globally, it constructs its relations with other states with pragmatic goals and religio-ideological tools. When dealing with US and European countries, it uses the dichotomy of "Self and Other," stressing the differences and peculiarities of civilizations. When speaking with Muslim countries, it stresses the importance of the "Muslim Universe" and Iran's central role at that Universe; with regard to the regional secular countries, it emphasizes the shared civilization and common past.

Iran's security institutions are operating with Iran's military forces as their core safeguards. The Islamic Republic has two, often competing, military forces, which maintain their separate missions in and out of the country."[10]Iran's military forces and its military doctrine have evolved, and refined itself in the process as a response to a highly inhospitable regional security environment. Just a year after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iraq invaded Iran, and by the early 2010s, the United States posed credible security threats by occupying two of Iran's eastern and western neighbors—Afghanistan and Iraq—though eliminating its erstwhile enemies, the Taliban and the Saddam Hussein regime.[11]Although the Iran-Iraq War is the cornerstone of the Iran security and military discourse, and

[9]ManshourVarasteh, "Understanding Iran's National Security Doctrine", UK, 2013

[10]Daniel L. Byman ,"Iran's security policy in post-revolutionary era", RAND, 2001, p.33

[11] Mohammad Nuruzamman, "What comes next for Iran's defense doctrine", available at http://nationalinterest.org/feature/what-comes-next-irans-defense-doctrine-18360 (01.08.201

the lessons of the war are the roots of the country's national security strategy, Iran's military doctrine is presented as a defensive doctrine via Iranian officials. The Iranian president stressed in his speech on the occasion of the Islamic Republic Army Day that "the Iranian doctrine is not the doctrine of war but a "military and defensive doctrine," and the strategy of the Islamic Iran is the strategy of "active deterrence for establishment of peace and security in Iran and the regional countries."[12]

Some analysts believe that national security strategy of IRI can be divided to six components, namely:

1. **Recognition of the Islamic Revolution and countries political structure**
2. **Security: military guarantees for Iran's territorial integrity and security**
3. **Economy: extraction of natural resources**
4. **"Regional Hegemony"**
5. **Recognition of a Leading International Status**
6. **"Exporting the Islamic Revolution" and Leading the Islamic Camp.[13]**

In his remarkable essay written shortly after the Rouhani's first win in the presidential elections, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif states:

"The post-revolutionary foreign policy of Iran has been based on a number of cherished ideals and objectives embedded in the country's constitution. These include the preservation of Iran's independence, territorial integrity, and national security and the achievement of long-term, sustainable national development. Beyond its borders, Iran seeks to enhance its regional and global stature; to promote its ideals, including Islamic democracy; to expand its bilateral and multilateral relations, particularly with neighboring Muslim-majority countries and nonaligned states; to reduce tensions and manage disagreements with other states; to

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[12] "President Rouhani describes Iranian military doctrine as "defensive"", available at http://english.irib.ir/programs/political/item/208122-president-rouhani-describes-iranian-military-doctrine-as-defensive (02.07.2017)

[13] "Tension's in Iran's national security strategy", available at http://reut-institute.org/Publication.aspx?PublicationId=1769 (03.07.2017)

foster peace and security at both the regional and the international levels through positive engagement; and to promote international understanding through dialogue and cultural interaction."[14]

In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, Iran has adopted the multidimensional foreign policy and has specific tools and ways for dealing with other countries in the regional and global arena.

According to IRGC leaders, the experience and results of the Iran-Iraq War hold important lessons for Iran's security. Together, these lessons form a national security doctrine that combines ideological and military components.[15]

These "lessons" are the main topic of Iran's national security and are referred to in and out of the country at all possible stages and for domestic and international audiences. In 2017 during The Munich Security Conference, the Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif when speaking about new political order and some complications for Islamic Republic of Iran, once again made some historic excurses and mentioned the Iran-Iraq war's reasons and results as proof of unfair attitudes of Western countries towards Iran.[16] From his perspective, "The UN resolution of 598 that ended the Iran-Iraq war is relevant today."

Given the popularity and the importance of the "Iran-Iraq" war discourse in the frame the perceptions of Iran in the field of international relations; it is crucial to highlight the main markers of that war:

"In both the IRGC narrative and in the public discourse of the Islamic Republic, the war is given two specific appellations: the Imposed War, because it was imposed on Iran by Iraq; and the Holy or Sacred

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[14] Mohammad JavadZarif, "What Iran really wants: Iran's Foreign policy during Rouhani era", Foreign Affairs magazine, May/June 2014 Issue, available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2014-04-17/what-iran-really-wants(04.07.2017)

[15] Annie Tracy Samuel, " Perceptions and narratives of the security: The Iranian revolutionary Guards Corps and Iran-Iraq war", Harvard Kennedy School, 2012, p. 12, available at http://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/samuel_perceptions.pdf (04.07.2017)

[16] Statement by Mohammad Javad Zarif, Munich Security Conference 2017, 19 February 2017, available athttps://www.securityconference.de/en/media-library/munich-security-conference-2017/video/statement-by-mohammad-javad-zarif-1/ (02.07.2017)

Defense, because Iran was defending not just the country but the Islamic regime and even Islam itself.''[17]

Thus, Iran's defensive military doctrine is mostly anchored in the historic lessons driven from the "Imposed and Sacred War" and all major economic and energy projects of the country are supposed to serve to those lessons. The Nuclear program of Iran is no exception. Even though the Supreme leader of Iran stresses that the nuclear program of Iran does not aim to produce nuclear arms because "it is perceived as a big sin,"[18] the nuclear program of the country itself can be a major restraining factor for foreign intervention.

USA: Tehran and Washington have had no formal diplomatic relations since the Iran hostage crisis in 1979. In the mid-1980s, the Reagan administration dealt with Iran by selling the regime arms in exchange for Americans held hostage in Lebanon. There has also been some low-level cooperation between Washington and Tehran on antidrug policies and antiterrorism actions in Afghanistan[19], and on a certain level, there have been possibilities to have such cooperation in Syria, but Iran rejected it because of the US' "corrupt intentions."[20] Starting from Rouhani's victory in the 2013 presidential elections, Iran and USA have adopted a strategy of giving the other side a chance for better negotiations. This new phase resulted in signing the Joint Comprehensive plan of Action, which is known as the "Iran deal," "Iran's Nuclear Deal," and/or even "historic deal."[21] This new stage of possible cooperation between world powers and Iran, and especially the USA and Iran, has gained some real difficulties because of the Trump administration and his rough rhetoric and policy against Iran. His

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[17] Annie Tracy Samuel, " Perceptions and narratives of the security: The Iranian revolutionary Guards Corps and Iran-Iraq war", Harvard Kennedy School, 2012, p. 8, available at http://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/ samuel_perceptions.pdf (04.07.2017)

[18] http://www.leader.ir/fa/speech/9182/ای-هسته-دانشمندان-دیدار-در-بیانات (05.08.2017)

[19] Lionel Beahner, "Iran's multifaceted Foreign Policy", https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/irans-multifaceted-foreign-policy(05.08.2017)

[20] http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13930624001016 (07.08.2017)

[21] https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/node/328996 (03.07.2017)

statements about reviewing the Deal and keeping "Iran on notice" have evolved to real anti-Iranian actions: starting with the Travel Ban for several Muslim countries including Iran, continuing with new US sanctions and triumphing with Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia on the day of Iran's presidential elections, and signing unprecedented rich arm agreements with the Saudis.

These US government actions are perceived as expected threats against Iran in line with Iran's rhetoric of "otherness of US," and give yet another piece of evidence of necessity of the most popular pillars of Iranian foreign rhetoric, namely "Death to America."[22]One of the main characteristics of Iran's foreign policy is its sensitivity towards the lack of respect and acceptance of its rules. During the Munich Security Conference, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif once again stressed these characteristics. In his words, "Iran does not respond well to threats, to coercion, but does respond to the mutual respect."[23]

Dealing with USA, Iran feels threats towards three components of its national strategy: lack of recognition of Iran's current political system, security issues, and economic troubles. For Iran, it is crucial to gain international recognition and feel safe about the current regime. But with the US stressing Iran's backing of the organizations that America lists in the line of Terrorist organizations and with backing the regional foes of the IRI, Iran feels threatened towards that component of its national strategy. The economic component of the country's national strategy suffers from different types of sanctions of US that are in place starting from Iran's Islamic revolution and are still increasing. Additionally, direct threats for Iran's security are perceived as the actions and policies of USA in the Persian Gulf region as well as in Syria. Syria is viewed as the main gates of Iran's national security and the important part of Iran's led "Shia crescent". Iran perceives the war against Assad's regime in Syria as a fight against its interests and against its security. It blames the US for arming and

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[22]In line with "death to Zionist Regime"
[23]Mohammad JavadZarif, "What Iran really wants: Iran's Foreign policy during Rouhani era", Foreign Affairs magazine, May/June 2014 Issue, available at https://www. foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2014-04-17/what-iran-really-wants (15.06.2017)

supporting the extremist Islamic Sunni groups responsible for the situation in Syria. Thus, the presence of Islamic Revolution Guards Corps in Syria is explained both as ideological as well as security obligation. Though "the Army of the Islamic Republic and the Guards Corps of the Revolution are responsible not only for defending the borders, but also for the ideological mission of holy war in the way of God and fighting to expand the rule of God's law in the world,"[24] the Iranian special forces under leadership of Ghasem Soleimani are defending not only the "borders of Islamic revolution," but also geographic borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. After the 2017 terrorist attacks in the heart of Tehran, this explanation became uncontested throughout Iranian society.

The US is also blamed for creating and maintaining the chaos in the region and beyond it. Different extremist organizations and spread of terrorism is believed to be the result of US politics and those of other western countries. Rouhani stated in his speech at the UN assembly meeting that "the genesis of borderless violent extremism and terrorism could be attributed to the security strategies developed by major powers in the past 15 years. The main lesson to learn from the analysis of this trend is that security in one region at the cost of insecurity in others would not only be impossible but it could also lead to more insecurity everywhere."[25]

In public discourse, there are two incidents in the history of the countries that are the most difficult to overcome: the 1953 coup de tat of the Mosadegh government in Iran supported by the US, and the Iranian hostage Crisis of 1979.[26] When asking about the possibility to overcome these "unhappy memories," the Foreign minister of IRI Mohammad Javad Zarif said: "What needs to be done is to look forward."[27] According to the Minister, with the Nuclear Deal, there is a possibility to rebuild the relations between the countries and to do that on the new foundation, on the

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[24]Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution, http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution.html (02.05.2017)

[25] Rouhani speech at the UN, September 22, 2016, available at http://www.president.ir/en/95419wo (17.05.2017)

[26] "The Iranian hostage crisis", https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/iraniancrises (03.05.2017)

[27] "A conversation with Mohammad Javad Zarif", https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-mohammad-javad-zarif (17.08.2017)

foundation of trust. "Iran in our view and in the view of the IAEA, built trust by implementing its end of the bargain. Unfortunately, as I said in answering the previous question, the United States didn't. So it creates the impression in Iran that the United States' hostility towards Iran will never end. And I think that can be remedied, while history is history, and we cannot do much about history."[28] As is obvious from the Minister's approach, the Nuclear Deal is considered as a chance to overcome the "unhappy memories" between the two countries and create a more secure environment for further relations. In general, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement reached in Vienna on 14 July between Iran, the P5+1, and the European Union[29], is perceived and analyzed in the framework of Iran's national security. After the signing of the agreement, the president of IRI Hassan Rouhani in a number of interviews stressed the fact that the victory of Iran's diplomacy with that agreement is the fact that they managed to prevent the USA from trying to make Iran another Iraq. According to him, the main meaning of that agreement is defending the country's National Security, and although "the Iranian nation is not fearing from threats, this agreement helps to abandon those threats. "In his words,

"The security we are considering is not only in the matter of war but also [towards] the creation of a safe environment for economic, social, and political activities. This environment is more secure in comparison to previous years. Implementing the agreement and the United Nations Security Council resolution will not create any problems for our national security and defensive power."[30]

RUSSIA: "No East, No west, Islam" has been the main driving motto of Iran's foreign policy after the Islamic revolution. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the IRI relations with the "East," and particularly with Russia have adopted different attitudes. Having mutual interests in the region and competing interests in the field of natural

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[28]Ibid.

[29]"Joint comprehensive plan of action", https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/ (01.05.2017)

[30]گفتگوی صدا و سیمایجمهوریاسلامیبا حسن روحانی در مورد تواف هسته و دیگر مسائل روز, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3Xu_u60v4s (14.05.2017)

resources make the relations of two countries friendly but complicated. Political analyst Mohsen Milani has named those relations the "uncomfortable alliance."[31] Despite the "uncomfortable" nature of their "alliance," it successfully lasts in the framework of regional hot spots. The two countries have mutual interests in keeping Assad's regime in power and not "giving up the Syria," and both have interest in maintaining the status quo in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In the Caspian region, both countries are interested in not allowing other countries of the region and especially Azerbaijan to give permission to the non-regional forces to use the waters of the sea. By taking into consideration the concept of "maslahat," Iran, including its Muslim population, has avoided involvement in the internal conflicts of Russia.[32]This policy can be explained by the fact that Iran's national security strategy has had two primary objectives ever since Khamenei became Iran's leader: to integrate the Iranian economy into the global system of finance and technology and to deter the threats from the United States and Israel.[33]

Although Iran and Russia have some contradictory interests in bilateral relations taking into account especially their economic competitiveness, and despite the expression of not very high level of the trust between the two,[34] the countries have cooperated successfully on a regional level. According to Iranian researchers: "Iran and Russia could have come to a common definition of identities and norms governing the

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[31] Mohsen Milani, "Iran and Russia's uncomfortable alliance", Foreign affairs, 31.08.2016, available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2016-08-31/iran-and-russias-uncomfortable-alliance (12.06.2017)
[32]His predecessor Ayatollah Khomeini has sent a special letter to late president of USSR Gorbachov condemning him in not giving special attention to the Islam and stressing that the problems of the USSR are because of the lack of special attention to the religion. For the text of the letter, see http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8510090317(02.06.2017)
[33] Gareth Porter, "Rouhani's dual messages and Iran's security strategy", available athttp://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/rouhani-s-dual-messages-and-iran-s-security-strategy-1712351174 (14.06.2017)
[34]It's worth mentioning the statement of Minster of Defense of IRI, Hossein Dehghan about Russia's "betrayal of trust", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxPA2nTAHak (05.06.2017)

patterns of foreign relations through benefiting the capacities of regional convergence despite heterogeneity of interests in bilateral relations".[35]

TURKEY: Relations with Turkey deal with three components of Iran's national security: the economic component, the security component, and its desire to be a regional hegemony.

Turkey is a Sunni Muslim country aligned with NATO and with different views on issues concerning Syria and Iraq. Turkey is Iran's main rival in the sphere of regional influence in the South Caucasus, and is the main concurrent for the position of the leading country of the Muslim world. Former Foreign Minister and current top adviser of Ali Khamenei, Ali Akbar Velayati has stated that the "two countries are capable of playing a leading role in shaping the future of the Muslim World."[36]At the same time, Iran considers Turkey as one of the victims of the Western "New Middle East" program. According to Ali Khamenei, the "New Middle East" of Western powers brought war in Syria, Iraq, Libya, etc., and also brought terrorism and sectarian tensions to the regional countries, including Turkey.[37] Iran is interested in the stability of Turkey taking into account the 500 km length borders between the two countries and high volume of border communications.[38]The other reason for Iran preferring Turkey's current government is the fact that all the opposition groups have unfriendly attitudes towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words, Iran has plenty of unresolved issues with Turkey's current government but it prefers to try to solve the problems with a stable Turkey rather than have unstable neighbor with hostile government. These attitudes explain the position of Iran towards the coup de tat of Turkey in 2016. The coup d'etatattempt was criticized by all political members, including the

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[35]ElahehKoolaee, MandanaTishehyar, "The new regionalism between Iran and Russia in Eurasia", Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly, Vol. 11, Nos. 1-2, Fall 2013-Winter 2014, pp. 49-66 (12.06.2017)

[36]http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2016/07/31/477806/Iran-Turkey-Ali-Akbar-Velayati-Riza-Hakan-Tekin (10.06.2017)

[37] Ayatollah Khamenei: "There is terrorism in Turkey",
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WmEcUEbV0I (05.06.2017)

[38]Amir Hossein Yazdanpanah, "Coup de tat in Turkey and deciphering Iran's positions", http://khorasannews.com/newspaper/page/19304/3/537348/0 (12.06.2017)

President, the Foreign Minister, and the members of Parliament. The secretary of Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani stated that Iran supports the Turkey's legal government and opposes any kind of coup- either initiated domestically or supported by foreigners.[39]

Additionally, Turkey is Iran's main economic partner,[40] and a stable Turkey means a stable Iran-Turkey economic relationship. Different researchers show that Turkey is among the largest trade partners of Iran and this partnership has a potential to deepen after the lifting of Iranian sanctions.[41]

Although Turkey and Iran have had contradictory interests in the Syrian conflict, in August 2016, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accepted that Assad might remain in power in Syria through a period of political transition, and both countries are integral parts of Russia-led talks on an overall political solution for Syria.[42] Moreover, already in August 2017 with the high level visits of Iranian government members to Turkey, a new phase of relation has started transforming the diametrically opposing positions of the countries into one with a similar approach towards the Syrian crisis.[43]

All these make Turkey-Iran regional partners, but at the same time, they are not such strong factors to prevent them from being the main regional rivals.

THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: After the independence of the South Caucasian states in 1991, Iran gained a possibility to return its influence in the region. The entire post-soviet area was perceived as a new opportunity

[39] "Regional rival Iran expresses for Turkey over coup attempt", http://www.reuters.com /article/us-turkey-security-iran-reaction-idUSKCN0ZW0LM (22.06.2017)

[40] "Turkey's Top Trading Partners", http://www.worldstopexports.com/turkeys-top-import-partners/ (18.06.2017)

[41] http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/FDD_RGE_Iran_Turkey_ Economic_Relations.pdf (23.06.2017)

[42] KennetzKatzman, "Iran's Foreign and defense policies", Congressional research service, June 15, 2017, p.39, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R44017.pdf (01.07.2017)

[43] Iran's armed forces Chief of Staff , Major General Mohammad Bagheri visited Turkey on 15 of August and had meetings with his Turkish counterpart, general HulusiAkar, president RecepTayipErdoghan and Defence minister NureetinCanikli, http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/82632837 (02.07.2017)

for dissemination of revolutionary ideas of the Islamic Republic of Iran. If in the Muslim post-soviet countries the Islamic ideology was used as a powerful tool for reaching that goal, in the countries like Armenia and Georgia Iran have been using its cultural and civilization tools for increasing its influence. Having adopted political neutrality towards the regional tensions, Iran tries to develop high level political relations with every country of the South Caucasus.

Despite the fact that the only Shia Muslim country of the region is Azerbaijan, it is perceived as the biggest potential threat to the national security of the country, given the increasing cooperation of the state with Israel and spreading ideology of "divided Azerbaijan." According to this ideology, the Republic of Azerbaijan encompasses only a portion of what it considers to be Azerbaijan and that the second part of it is in the North-West of Iran.[44] For the followers of this ideology, the Northern provinces of Iran are, in fact, the South of Azerbaijan. The other factor in the Iran-Azerbaijan relations is Iran's growing influence on the religious population of Azerbaijan, which is perceived as a strong Soft power of Iran and is a source of antagonism between the states.[45]

Though, recent developments in the field of anti-Iranian politics of the wider region, including participation of Azerbaijan,[46] and also Azerbaijan's anti-Shia domestic policy increase the tensions between the countries, their relations in economic terms remain strong.

Iran's relations with Armenia are frequently stressed as "relations in a very high level," both by the Armenian and the Iranian officials and experts. This quality of relations is mutually profitable for both countries: for Iran, Armenia is the only Christian country with common borders with it, their relations, beside the political, economic and strategic value, have also some implications for the country's international image. During the

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[44] NassibliNasib L., "Azerbaijan- Iran Relations: Challenges and Prospects." Harvard Kennedy School, November 30, 1999, http://www.belfercenter.org/publication/azerbaijan-iran-relations-challenges-and-prospects-event-summary (14.07.2017)
[45] For secular Azerbaijan the influence of Iranian Shiism is perceived as a potential threat to the state.
[46] The 2017 Riyadh summit and its consequences are labeled as anti-Iranian both in and out of Iran.

official meetings in their common past, the cultural ties and good political relations are stressed. During his visit to Armenia, the President of IRI Hassan Rouhani stressed "we are from the same Civilization and we share a common past and many cultural joint values."[47] During that visit, Presidents Rouhani and Sargsyan discussed a Persian Gulf-Black Sea transit and transport corridor. When travelling to Armenia Rouhani described the country as a "corridor to the Europe and the Black Sea."[48]

CHINA: Relations with China are very important for the Islamic Republic of Iran given the level of their economic cooperation and their mutual political interests in the region. China and Iran have had very extensive military relations which included selling of missile systems, ballistic missile technology, and assistance with Iran WMD programs,[49] and all these relations had their special importance during Iran-Iraq war.

Energy and its secure supply is a determining factor in China's policy for developing relations with Iran. The importance of energy in the countries' relations has been significant for China such that sanctions on Iran could not prevent it from promoting these relations.[50] These relations have gained a new possibility for the growth after the JCPOA.[51]After signing the deal, China's president visited Iran and had several important meetings with Iranian officials, including the Supreme Leader of IRI Ali Khamenei. During that meeting, the Supreme Leader stressed the importance of Iran-China strategic relations and gave special attention to the fact that "Iran will never forget the behavior of China during Iran's sanctions."[52] China was Iran's largest oil customer before the relief of the

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[47] "Armenia: Iranian president Rouhani holds bilateral talks with Sargsyan in Yerevan", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIjwD4DUWkU (19.05.2017)
[48] http://www.president.ir/fa/97013 (08.07.2017)
[49] Daniel Byman, ShahramChubin, AnoushirvanEhteshami, Jerold D. Green, "Iran's security policy in the post-revolutionary era", RAND Corporation, 2001, pp. 63 (08.07.2017)
[50]SeyedMasoud Mousavi Shafaee, Hossein Mohammadi, "The role of energy in Iran-China relations", Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly, Vol.11, Nos. 1-2, Fall 2013-Winter 2014, pp.67-86.(04.08.2017)
[51]KennetzKatzman, "Iran's Foreign and defense policies", Congressional research service, June 15, 2017, p.50 (01.07.2017)
[52] http://www.leader.ir/fa/content/14065/همراه-و-هیئت-چین-و-خلق-جمهوری-رئیس-دیدار (14.07.2017)

sanctions, and remains at the top after the sanctions were abolished.[53]The two countries place special emphasis on their economic ties, which include the "Silk Road" project. The leaderships of the countries believe that with economic joint projects, they can resist the USA's desire to control the economies and politics of the region.

Conclusion

• Iran's foreign and security strategies are being knitted and supervised in the different political, military, and religious structures and are supervised by the Supreme Leader.

• The ideology of the Islamic Republic makes no distinction between national and Islamic interests, but various self-identities of the country play special roles when dealing with regional and non-regional countries and entities. Ideas of the Revolution and the worldviews of Shia Islam are the core values of identity construction for Iran along with Islamic and Iranian self-expressions.

• Iran's security institutions are operating by having Iran's military forces as their core safeguards. The Islamic Republic has two, often competing, military forces, which maintain their separate missions in and out of the country. For one of them, namely IRGC borders of their mission are the "borders of the revolution," thus enabling them to operate in different countries, including Syria in the fight against ISIS. Iran presents fighting in Syria against the extremists as a national security issue, stressing that losing Syria means transferring the battle against "takfiri forces" to the borders of Iran.

• Lessons of the Iran-Iraq war and international sanctions and their relief are cornerstones of Iran's military and foreign policy doctrines. Given the Western backing of Iraq's intervention in Iran, Iran is cautious to not allow the foreign presence in its neighboring countries.

• Relations of Iran with global and regional powers are differentiated by the presence and lack of the trust in those relations. Thus, relations with USA are perceived as the most untrustworthy and full of threats,

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[53]IttThirarat, "Iran's big Asian oil customers return", Middle East Institute , August 23, 2016, http://www.mei.edu/content/map/irans-big-asian-oil-customers-return (18.07.2017)

cooperation with Russia have different layers of trust in bilateral, regional, and international relations, and its relationship with China has a profound portion of mutual trust.

• Relations with global and regional powers also have implications for Iran's attitudes towards regional and neighbor countries: the ones with closer ties with USA and NATO are perceived as countries with certain degrees of untrustworthiness, others are anticipated as bridges between Iran and the West. Turkey's membership in NATO, its support of extremist forces in Syria, and the competition for the influence in the South Caucasus make Turkey remain the regional rival of Iran.

• Iran sees the countries of the South Caucasus as the entities with shared civilization values. It develops its economic relations with Azerbaijan and names Armenia as a corridor towards Europe. Although economic relations with Azerbaijan are far more inclusive, political relations with Armenia remain the ones with higher level of trust and without any perception of threat.

• Despite the vulnerability of the JCPOA and new sanctions imposed by the USA, by developing the political path of "better relations with the West," Iran can also have possibilities to overcome the tensions in the region.

ԻՐԱՆԻ ԻՍԼԱՄԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ԱՆՎՏԱՆԳՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԱՌԱՆՁՆԱՀԱՏԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ

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«Մեր ազգային շահը անջատ չէ իսլամական շահից,
այս երկու երևույթները տարանջատելի չեն»
ԻԻՀ Հոգևոր Առաջնորդ Ալի Խամենեի

Բանալի բառեր՝ *Իրան, ազգային անվտանգություն, իսլամական գաղափարախոսություն, Իրան-Հայաստան*

Իրանի Իսլամական Հանրապետության (ԻԻՀ) ազգային անվտանգության ռազմավարության առանցքային առանձնահատ-կությունը Իսլամական գաղափարախոսությունն է, որի վրա կառուցակցված է այդ երկրի «ազգն» ու որպես արդյունք՝ նաև «ազգային շահը»: Թեև ԻԻՀ-ն երբեք հասանելի չի դարձրել որևէ փաստաթուղթ ազգային անվտանգության ռազմավարության կամ արտաքին քաղաքականության դոկտրինի վերաբերյալ, բայց երկրի քաղաքական վարքի պատմությունն ու ներկա ռազմաքաղաքական դերակատարների քայլերը հնարավորություն են տալիս ուրվագծելու ազգային անվտանգության հիմնական հատկանիշները: Այլ կերպ ասած՝ «Իրանի ազգային անվտանգային քաղաքականությունը պետք է վերլուծել խոսույթային համատեքստում»: Այս հետազոտության նպատակը խոսույթային համատեքստում Իրանի ազգային անվտանգության և արտաքին քաղաքականության քննարկումն ու վերլուծությունն է:

Իրանի Իսլամական Հանրապետության ներքա կրոնա-քաղաքական համակարգը կառուցակցում է մի քանի ինքնությունններ: Իրանի ազգային անվտանգության ռազմավարությունը խարսխված է ինքնարնկալման այդ մի քանի, հաճախ միրցակից մոտեցումներին: Այդ ինքնությունններն ու դրանցից բխող կրոնաքաղաքական հարացույցներն մի կողմից բարդացնում, մյուս կողմից մանևրելու լայն հնարավորությններ են ընձեռում ԻԻՀ արտաքին քաղաքական համակարգին: Հոդվածում արտացոլված են Իրանի ազգային անվտանգության ապահովման առանցքային միտումները, արտաքին քաղաքականության մեջ մանևրելու գործիքակազմն ու դրա առանձնահատկությունները գերտերությունների ու տարածա-շրջանային միրցակիցների, ինչպես նաև Հարավային Կովկասի երկրների հետ հարաբերվելիս: