

## IRAN AND CENTRAL ASIA: THE NEW GEOPOLITICS

Saltanat Toleuovna Jakubayeva\* Nurzhamal Abdrazakovna Aldabek\* and  
Aizhan Mazhmetovna Amirgaliyeva\*

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to carry out the analysis of the external IRI policy in Central Asia in the context of new geopolitical configuration, to study the economic and political aspects of the strengthening of Iran in the region, to identify its features and the most important aspects of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Iran as well as the development patterns, to analyze the objective socio-economic situation in the region of Central Asia in the context of formation of a new geopolitical situation after the cancellation of sanctions against Iran.

This paper is based on the use of the geo-political importance of this subject and is supported by the papers of Kazakh, Russian and foreign authors. The following general scientific methods and techniques are used in this paper: the new functional analysis, the structural analysis, the scientific abstraction, the qualitative expert estimates, the quantitative estimates, the comparative analysis. The changes in the geopolitical situation in Central Asia after the cancellation of the US sanctions against Iran are studied in this paper. The role of Iran in the region and its importance are defined based on the strengthening of the integration processes and creation of the EAEC. The role of Kazakhstan as one of the leaders in the framework of modern international relations in Central Asia is also studied in this paper. The recommendations on improvement of the influence and, in particular, on foreign policy decisions of the Republic of Kazakhstan are given.

**Keywords:** Geopolitics, regional cooperation, internal cooperation, diplomacy, foreign policy initiatives, the main actors.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Description of the problem

A variety of views on the place and role of Iran in the international system, both at global and regional level, has formed by now. The foreign policy of IRI in CA is characterized by many researchers as the policy, focused primarily on improvement of its influence and Shia Islam in the region. However, the situation is not so unambiguous actually. At least due to its geographical position, Iran is an integral part of Central Asia, and in different periods of its history it tried to adjust the relations, often informal, with the countries of the region through very interesting to study, non-standard criteria for selecting potential partners and the principles of building a relations with them. Under the new conditions, the degree of development of strategic relations with the countries of the region can be a kind of a “bridge” for Iran. This idea has found its practical expression in the foreign concept of the new Iranian leadership, represented by the President Hassan Rouhani, who is confident that the relations between Iran and the Central Asian countries will be respectful and pragmatic.

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\* Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, The Republic of Kazakhstan, 050040, Almaty city, Al-Farabi Ave., 71

In this regard, the authors attempted to analyze in this paper the new trends in the foreign policy of Iran and their potential impact on Central Asia; the points of intersection, the challenges and the threats to the interests of these countries; the dynamics of the Iran-Kazakhstan relations in Central Asia; the role of China, the United States of America and the Russian Federation in this region; some conclusions on the possible options of the geopolitical developments around Central Asia are given herein.

### **Relevance of the study**

The foreign policy of Iran in Central Asia and the former Soviet region are of particular scientific and practical interest. Because of the historical, cultural and socio-economic development of Central Asia, inhomogeneous in its structure and conflictogenic nature of the region, there is no definite leader, and the leadership is claimed by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as a rule. The political situation in Central Asia has a considerable mobility, multi-level nature and a low degree of predictability of the future events. The integration processes of both regional and trans-regional cooperation are improved continuously. However, even in those countries where the political situation seemed to be relatively stable, the socio-economic and ethno-confessional conflicts are brewing, leading to a new confrontation, unbalancing the established regional structure (the retirement of I.G. Karimov, the elections in Kyrgyzstan, the ethnic tensions between the Uzbeks and the Tajiks, between the Uzbeks and the Kyrgyz).

The strengthening of the role of Iran in Central Asia is manifested both in the internal structure and in the features of political systems of some countries in the region, as well as in their behavior in the international arena.

The crisis is exacerbated by a serious fragmentation of the Islamic world by sectarian (the Sunni-Shias, the Salafis, the Wahabis), national and political attributes. In recent years, the role and ambitions of Iran improved extraordinarily, based on its “nuclear weapons program” and the understanding from the part of the Muslim street. At the same time Russia and China strive vigorously to become the leader of the Central Asian region.

The relevance of the study is due to the value of bilateral relations for the stability in the Central Asian region.

Today, the serious transformation processes took place in the former Soviet region, having a direct impact on the situation in the field of regional security. The accumulation of the crisis potential, in connection with the Ukrainian events, improves increasingly the role and the capacity of the Russian influence on the integration processes in Central Asia, the increase in the RF foreign policy steps in this direction, requiring the most complete and integral representation of the system of international relations in the Central Asian region. In this connection the analysis of the Central Asian direction of Iran’s foreign policy, its historical experience in networking with the Muslim countries of Central Asia, is of special importance.

The Iran's foreign policy as a whole is worth mentioning. The analysis of this problematics is important for the formation of the objective view of the Iran's foreign policy strategy, which is both of theoretical and practical significance. The study of the "Central Asian" vector of the Iran's foreign policy based on its relations with Kazakhstan, is of significant practical importance, in particular, for the purposes of conduct of the situational analysis and practical research of a range of problems.

### **Literature review**

Mainly, the scientific papers in the field of foreign policy and regional security, written by the local, Russian and foreign experts, are used for this study. The problem of IRI's foreign policy and the new geopolitical configuration in Central Asia are a major focus of interest of such Kazakh politicians and researchers, as K.K. Tokayev (1995, 2003), B. Sultanov (2002), C. Kushkumbaev (2007), E. Karin (2012), K.L. Syroezhkin (2006), M. Laumulin (2000, 2002, 2006).

In particular, the studies performed by K.K. Tokayev, B. Sultanov and K.L. Syroezhkin, are based on the Russian-Kazakh relations in the context of strengthening of the integration processes in Central Asia. The main conclusion, made by the authors is the creation of the EAEC. The Kazakhstan studies in the field of Iran's foreign policy in Central Asia are mainly represented by the works of S. Kushkumbaev (2007), where the role of Iran in the regional security system in the framework of the SCO is considered in some detail, the stages and evolution of the Kazakh-Iranian relations are distinguished. In the studies of E. Karin the problem of the essence and meaning of the "great game" in Central Asia and Iran's position was raised for the first time, its assessment was performed, the analysis of the impact on the socio-economic processes in Kazakhstan was carried out. Moreover, a generalized analysis of modern threats and challenges in the region, the religious factor and the problems of religious extremism is presented in his scientific works.

The problems of regional security and the new geopolitical configuration in Central Asia are comprehensively considered by M. Laumulina (2000) in "Kazakhstan in the modern international relations: security, geopolitics, political science". Also, some aspects of the problem under study are reflected in the works of T. Kasenov (1998), A.K. Tulegulov (1999) where the issues of exacerbation of the fight for Caspian oil and positions of the IRI and China are studied.

The matters of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the Islamic Republic of Iran and the problem of Iranian Kazakhs are considered in the monograph of Islam Zhemenei (2007) "Iran kazaktary". The problems of Arab-Islamic organizations in modern Kazakhstan are considered in the monograph of D.Vilkovsky (2014) "The Arab-Islamic organizations in modern Kazakhstan: external influence on the Islamic revival".

The individual aspects of the problem of Iran's foreign policy in Central Asia and the Middle East were studied by such Russian scientists as A. Vasiliev (1983) in "The Persian Gulf in the midst of the storm", E. Primakov (2012) in "Confidential. Near East. On stage and behind the scenes".

The civilizational features of Iran and the countries of Central Asia are covered in the scientific papers of Iranian scientists and publicists Mohammadali Islami Nadushan (2008), Muhammad Ali Mirsharifi (2011).

In addition to the above the articles from the English-language magazines (Central Asian Survey, Asiaweek, China Quaterly, The Free China Journal, China today, Far Eastern Economic Review) were used in the course of this study.

A great attention to the problems of international cooperation of Central Asian countries is paid by the researchers from the USA, the UK and France. French researcher Y. Melet (Yasmin Melet China's political and economic relations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan // Central Asian Survey 1998) argues that since the collapse of the USSR, China has been occupying a special position in the region of Central Asia, especially in terms of the search for potential partners and models. Being the only adjacent country outside the CIS, Iran is the important and impressive partner due to its geographical location. The proximity of such a country may cause a certain concern, the cancellation of economic sanctions and some economic successes, achieved by Iran through the hard social and political control, make Iran interesting as the model for the leaders of the former Soviet republics. The scientific papers of M.B. Olcott "The new Central Asian countries: independence, foreign policy and regional security" and R. Olive "New Central Asia: creation of nations" are also of great interest. The publications of such modern American researchers as G. Kissinger, Z. Brzezinski, S. Huntington and others are of great value.

The main purpose of this paper is to study the foreign policy of the IRI in Central Asia in the context of new geopolitical configuration, to identify its features and the most important stages of development, to analyze the objective determinants and socio-economic consequences of the expansion of the Iranian presence in Central Asia in the context of national security issues and formation of the new regional security system.

The paper consists of 6 parts: introduction, methods, results, discussion, conclusions, references.

## **METHODS**

The theoretical and methodological basis for this paper is a geopolitical theory. The theory of Z. Brzezinski, according to which Central Asia can be regarded as a great chessboard, while distinguishing two problems: the regional security managed by the structural changes in the political systems of the Central Asian countries; the

neoclassical economic “pull-push” theory, the factors of macro-economic level. In the course of this study a complex of scientific and special methods of political science is used. The systematic method and the use of the analytical approach allow to substantiate the correlation between the political processes in the region and the national security problems in the context of Iran’s foreign policy in Central Asia.

The methodology is chosen to maximize the full disclosure of the worded tasks. A set of practical methods offered by the theory of international relations, in conjunction with the historical-comparative method and the system approach are used.

In addition, the theoretical and methodological basis of the study is based on the use of the interdisciplinary nature of the subject and is based on the works of Kazakh, Russian and foreign authors. The following scientific methods and techniques are used in this paper: scientific abstraction, grouping, qualitative expert estimates, quantitative estimates assessment, comparative analysis and synthesis. The comparative analysis allows to trace the general laws and principles of Iran’s foreign policy in Central Asia and the problems of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Iran. Due to this the various events are combined, identified and the causal relations among them are assessed.

The method of observation is used for printed media materials, articles in websites and social networks.

## **RESULTS**

The increasing political and scientific interest in Iran’s foreign policy in Central Asia, the focus on regional security problems and the socio-cultural and religious situation, are very timely, as the situation, associated with the religious extremism and separatism in Central Asia, is not easy. At the moment, the problem of studying of the economic characteristics of the Iranian presence comes to the fore along with the problem of religious extremism. It is of paramount importance in understanding of the current political developments and scenarios of their future development in Central Asia. Sophisticated modern political processes actualize the problem of the Iranian presence in Central Asia after the cancellation of the US blockade, the factors of interaction between the countries of Central Asia and Iran, the problem of competition in the region (S.K. Kushkumbayev). It should be emphasized that the issues of regional and national security in Central Asia are largely determined by the policy of the leading actors such as Russia, the USA, China, by the nature and intensity of the foreign policy of these actors. In this regard, considering the above-mentioned studies, as well as the materials published in the mass media, the following general results concerning the problems of the new geopolitical situation in Central Asia and the IRI’s policy at the present stage can be derived:

1. The Islamic Republic of Iran being the integral part of the international relations, is expanding its presence in the Central Asian region and is strengthening its economic and political influence after the cancellation of the US sanctions. According to this, the structure of making of the foreign policy decisions on IRI, has changed.
2. The new foreign policy doctrine of the IRI is a prerequisite for further regional changes in Central Asia, they are able to influence the foreign policy decisions of the main actors, the formation of a new political and economic situation in the region (Mohammadali Islami Nadushan, 2008. Iran has something to say to the world). The correlations between the civilizational processes and the national identity are defined by the new geopolitical aspects, threats and challenges of the religious extremism, as well as by the economic feasibility.
3. The study of the dynamics of the political processes in Central Asia and Iran's foreign policy allow to determine the features of the modern geopolitics, to understand the ethnic and cultural specifics of the Kazakh-Iranian relations. At the beginning of the III millennium the world faces the strategically significant changes, such as the occurrence and formation of the new independent states in Central Asia as the subjects of international relations.
4. The enormous potential of energy resources is concentrated in Central Asia and Iran, the implementation of which under the new conditions of market reforming and the current financial and economic crisis, leads to a revision of the foreign policy doctrines and goals and is accompanied by a marked acceleration of bilateral Kazakh-Iranian relations. The further strengthening of foreign economic relations and the active penetration of the Iranian capital in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Central Asian countries.
5. The bilateral Kazakh-Iranian relations are quite diverse (K.K. Tokaev, 2003). They are dominated mainly by trade-economic relations. The IRI's economy is quite specific and has a complex internal structure.
6. There are no reliable studies and publications of the official data on the presence of the IRI in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the absence of the information on major Kazakh-Iranian trade and economic, investment projects generates the "myths", accompanying the Kazakh-Iranian relations, and islamofobia towards the IRI.
7. The relevance of the study of the IRI's foreign policy in Central Asia under the new geo-political situation is determined not only by its novelty, after the cancellation of the sanctions and insufficient knowledge, but also by the insufficiency of the analysts, experts in the Iranian science in Kazakhstan, and hence by the need for the formation of an analytical framework for decision-making in this field.

8. The current geopolitical situation in Central Asia allows Iran to expand and increase the joint business, employment and new jobs.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Cancellation of sanctions and Iran's foreign policy in Central Asia: the coincidence of interests**

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) and the Central Asian countries are close from the geographical, historical, cultural and economic point of view, which make their regional policy interdependent and make a significant contribution to the formation of a new geopolitics in the region of Central Asia in the period following the cancellation of sanctions imposed against the IRI in connection with the IRI's nuclear program.

Being a country with a rich historical past, with the experience of an active foreign policy, Iran, of course, plays an important role in the regional security architecture. For the countries of Central Asia, Iran is not a new partner. Historically, the countries and the peoples of the region have actively cooperated, they have been united by the cultural life for many centuries. Iran is guided exclusively by pragmatic geopolitical objectives in its foreign policy. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the countries of Central Asia have received a new impetus to strengthen the relations with Iran. Two factors are of great importance in this trend:

First, the ideological factor – the new independent countries of the region in many ways re-worked out the ideological basis of its development. For this purpose it was important to prove their belonging to Khurasan and other Iranian-Turkic states in the region.

Second, as you know, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the process of breaking of the transport corridors for the products of the new independent countries began. Consequently, Iran became the important link for the outlet to the ocean and ports for the countries of the region. Iran was one of the key countries that really contributed to the development of the infrastructure projects in Central Asia. The geographical position of Iran is extremely beneficial for transit. At the moment, the commissioning of a number of major transport facilities and railway lines to connect Central Asia with Iran, is being performed. They are able to shorten the way to the Persian Gulf by 600 thousand kilometers in case of successful implementation.

Today, after the cancellation of sanctions Kazakhstan, along with other Central Asian states, became an important country for the Islamic Republic of Iran, located in the immediate vicinity of the pulses of its global and regional influence. In this regard, it is clear that the IRI will increase the activity of the economic policy in Kazakhstan as the main instrument of comprehensive influence, occupying the free economic niches of all kinds.



There are more than 500 companies with Iranian participation in Kazakhstan today. Basically, the Iranian companies are involved in the supply of agricultural and engineering products to Iran, the joint implementation of projects in the chemical and petrochemical industry, construction of joint factories and many others.

In April 2016 Nursultan Nazarbayev at the official meeting in Tehran with the President of the IRI noted, that the political and socio-economic transformations in Kazakhstan would create the conditions for the involvement of the Iranian businessmen in the implementation of the infrastructure program “Nurly Zhol” and the International specialized exhibition “EXPO 2017”.

Today, it became necessary to apply new models of cooperation, to form jointly the “economic band” after the cancellation of the US sanctions (S. Kushkumbayev).

### **The geopolitical interests of the USA in Central Asia and Iran**

In the early 90-ies of XX century the dramatic changes that have seriously changed the geopolitical structure of the world took place in the world development. The modern world is becoming increasingly interdependent and more vulnerable at the same time. The formation of the new situation in Central Asia is, primarily, due to the transformation of Central Asia into one of the key regions in the geopolitical system of coordinates of the Eurasian space. First of all, the meaning of the term used should be defined. The term “Central Asia” refers to Kazakhstan and the former Central Asian republics within the USSR (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan). After 1992, these states have become the subjects of the international cooperation in all spheres, they have entered into various alliances and blocs, they have a great potential for the economic development (natural resources, skilled labor force), they have an important political and strategic position between Europe and Asia.

1. Central Asia is located in the center of the Eurasian continent, which has a strategic importance in terms of the impact of Central Asia on the security and stability of a large part of the continent.
2. The balance of power in the vast area of the Eurasian continent depends on the direction of development of the situation in each country in Central Asia and in the whole region.
3. The region has a huge number of natural, especially hydrocarbon, resources of global value. The control over the fuel and energy resources and their transportation routes makes it possible to control the situation in Central Asia.
4. Central Asia is located at the junction of the Eurasian transport corridors and has the ample transportation and communication network. The Central Asian region has the outlet via IRI to the Persian Gulf, the outlet via Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian Ocean, and the outlet via China to the Asia-Pacific region.



5. At the turn of XX-XXI centuries, the international community has declared war on the international terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking. Central Asia turned to be in the heart of the war and became even more important in the emerging new system of international relations.

In the broad strategic context the new geopolitical situation in Central Asia is characterized by the following points: firstly, by the need for the international community to take the effective and decisive measures to address the threat of international terrorism, emanating from Afghanistan, which has led to the active presence of the West in the region of Central Asia; secondly, a long-term USA policy emerged in Central and South Asia, which is linked by its ideologists with the national security of the United States as a whole; thirdly, as a result of the above mentioned processes, as well as due to the significant weakening of the impact of the external threats previously emanated from Afghanistan, the unique opportunities for the comprehensive development and modernization of the region, with the effective support of the international community begin to form in Central Asia.

In our opinion, the main role in the geopolitics of the region belongs to Russia and China, directly bordering on Central Asia, as well as to the United States, which as a result of the placement of their military bases and active intervention in the affairs of the region, have turned today into a real military and political force in Central Asia.

The political processes in Central Asia affect the interests of major international competitors in the USA and many major regional powers. The impact on the “pain points” of the region opens up a variety of possibilities to influence the situation in neighboring countries. Not coincidentally, Central Asia is often associated with the “Heartland”, around which, according to H. Mckinder, the classic of the Western geopolitics, the “Geographical Pivot of History” rotates and the control over which promises the control over the entire continent.

The interests of the USA in Central Asia are mainly concentrated in such industries as oil, gas, uranium, gold etc., which have always attracted the attention of foreign capital. The hydrocarbon reserves of the Caspian Sea are included in the global “energy ellipse”, on the opposite side of which the Americans have found a lodgement long ago, having established the alliance with the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf.

This implies that it is very likely that Central Asia, notwithstanding any possible temporal fall out of the focus of the USA foreign policy, in the future will inevitably return in this focus time after time, and Washington (although it is officially denied) will play here the role of the opponent to the continental countries, similar to the British empire in the so-called The big game of the XIX century.

Today, owing to many factors, Central Asia, more and more comes to the fore in modern international relations. Currently, the regional and global interests of the various states intertwined in Central Asia in one local unit. By the beginning of 2003 the global (USA, Russia, China) and regional powers located on perimeter of the region and in the vicinity of it have already had their own interests in Central Asia. They are Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and India.

Iran began to play a special role in this region especially after the cancellation of the sanctions. The creation of the relations between Iran and the Central Asian countries, has always been of great importance as the destabilization of the situation in the “Big CA” has always been of equal danger for those countries. For example: the destabilization of the situation in Afghanistan in the early 90s, the drug trafficking, as well as the civil war in Tajikistan, where Iran was actively engaged with Russia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to settle the conflict and conclude peace agreement between warring parties.

As it is known, the Central Asian countries contribute to the settlement of a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. Due to the fact that the projects that were to come into force, could not be realized because of the possible negative reaction of Washington and Europe. Taking into account the urgency of focusing of the international community on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and for the purposes of improvement of its image, Kazakhstan contributed and provided a venue for negotiations between Iran and the Six (the United States of America, Russia, Britain, France, Germany, China, EC) in Almaty. The platform provided by the Kazakh side, was positively perceived by Iran. At the same time, the relations between Tehran and Astana on the legal issue of the Caspian Sea remain uneasy. Like Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan is the Caspian state, and to protect its interests it held joint military exercises in the Caspian Sea with the US armed forces, and proposed to strengthen the cooperation with the US in the region. This fact was jealously perceived by Tehran. Despite this fact, the two countries develop the cooperation in the infrastructure projects. In the field of transport and communication the construction of the pipeline “Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan – Iran” was negotiated, in the case of implementation of this project, the Kazakh oil can go directly to the Persian Gulf. In the period 2009 – 2014 the parties have already commissioned the railway project “Uzen (Kazakhstan) – Bereket – Gyzylgan Etrek (Turkmenistan) – Gorgan – (Iran)”.

The relations between Kazakhstan and Iran in the framework of the Caspian region are also associated by the issues of implementation of the joint projects of transport and communications nature. First of all, it concerns the negotiations on the construction of the Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan – Iran pipeline with the access to the Persian Gulf and the railway Uzen (Kazakhstan) – Gyzylgaya – Bereket – Etrek (Turkmenistan) – Gorgan (Iran). Today, the cooperation in Kazakh oil

refining is carried out under the contract of 1997, the transport logistics is performed through the Kazakh port of Atyrau, and the goods are shipped to the Iranian port of Neka, with the subsequent delivery to the oil refineries in Tehran, Tabriz, Arak and Isfahan. Iran ships the same equivalent amount of oil to Kazakhstan from its terminals in the Persian Gulf.

Given the fact that many countries are to some extent competitors on the energy market, for the development of cooperation in the infrastructure projects the pragmatism all countries allows to develop them jointly.

Since both Iran and the Central Asian countries are equally in need of investment, they are interested in the development of the infrastructure, to diversify the transport corridors. The Iran's cooperation with the Republic of Uzbekistan should be mentioned especially. The geographical position of Uzbekistan allows it to join the implemented infrastructure projects in the region as the safest transit for Turkmen gas transportation, as well as the transportation of many of Iranian goods to the eastern part of China are performed through the territory of Uzbekistan.

### **Russia and Iran: the influence on Central Asia**

In recent years, an important vector of economic strategy of the Russian Federation is the integration initiatives.

Today the information and diplomatic war with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEC) is going on. The most of the US grants earmarked for the so-called development of the regional economy (350 million USD in 2013-2016) was used to finance it.

The Russia's policy in Central Asia is entering a new stage of its development. This is confirmed by a transformation of the situation in the region, as well as by the changes in the international position of the Russian Federation.

According to M. Laumulin, the Central Asian policy of Moscow is characterized by the efforts to implement the so-called «Putin Doctrine». Its purpose, in general, is to ensure the integration of the post-Soviet space (with the greatest possible territorial coverage) using, primarily, the economic methods. Along with the economic levers it involves the use of political means. This policy expressed in the integrative establishments in the CIS (EurAsEC – The Customs Union, the Common Economic Space, CSTO, Union State of Belarus – Russian Federation), as well as numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements with the participation of Russia in the trade and economic cooperation, energy, transport and communications.

The period 2003 – 2006 was the most intense time for the implementation of this approach, when Moscow managed to strengthen significantly its position in Central Asia, to conclude the long-term contracts for the extraction and transportation of energy resources, to take control partially or completely over the strategic sectors of some countries in the region, to achieve profitable for RF routes for pipeline

construction. In addition, the economic penetration of the Russian companies was accompanied by the intensification of the military and technic and military-strategic cooperation of Russia with the countries of the region, the placement of Russian military bases and displacement of competitors (except for China).

However, after 2006 the international position of Russia began to change, affecting its policy in Central Asia. Moscow was gradually drawn into another round of confrontation with the West, and the region becomes the point of conflict of interests.

One of the main causes of the crisis in Russian-Western relations is the opposition of Moscow to the «color revolutions» in former Soviet countries. Including the Central Asian republics where Russia prevented (together with Kazakhstan) the escalation of this type of revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and supported Uzbekistan in its determination to prevent the civil war in the country due to the externally inspired revolt in Andijan.

In 2007 – 2008 the NATO expansion and the placement of the US missile defense system in Eastern Europe created a direct threat to Russia's national security. The relations between the Kremlin and the White House worsened during the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008. In this difficult situation, Moscow was counting on the political support from allies in the CSTO and the SCO. Militarily, the Kremlin had made its choice (like the USA previously) in favor of unilateral actions (conduct of the operations in the CIS, excluding the opinion of the allies on the integration associations). This approach will be decisive one in Moscow's policy and will have a significant impact on the security of the Central Asian countries (including the negative one) 1.

Both currently and in the near future the Russian policy in the international arena in general and in Central Asia in particular will be heavily influenced by the global financial and economic crisis and the associated economic downturn and the slowdown of the Russian economy. It is possible that in the near future, the Russian Federation will face severe economic difficulties due to the incompleteness of the structural reforms and modernization.

This will affect the Kremlin's activities in Central Asia. It is likely that the Russian policy will become more rigid: the need for new sources of raw materials to maintain its position as the largest exporter of energy to Europe will increase, as well as the competition between Russia, the West, and possibly Iran and China for the control over the sources of raw materials and main pipelines.

Moreover, the nature of trade and economic relations and the dynamics of labor market development in Russia and in Central Asia will change. We can not exclude the fact that in order to protect the internal market, the Russian government will start to turn off the integration initiatives, the movement of goods and labor forces. At the same time, Russia may attempt to strengthen its expansion on the Central Asian markets.

In 2008, the mechanisms of formation of domestic and foreign policy of Russia changed significantly. The half-autocratic (*ie* virtually sovereign) regimen of Putin was replaced by the so-called “tandemocracy”, that is, the political tandem “Putin – Medvedev” supporting by the the Russian establishment.

Given the cancellation of sanctions on Iran, the official Tehran can activate the economic relations with the countries in the region, slowed down during the sanctions. As noted above, some countries contributed to the solution of the Iranian nuclear issue, leaving the room for negotiations. The Central Asian countries hope to get out of geographic isolation through the development of transport corridors with Iran. If Iran and the Central Asian countries learn to work on the principle of the “Asian paradox”, where political problems do not interfere with the economic relations, the parties can achieve the real progress in the framework of long-term projects. It all depends on the readiness of the partners to get away from the indoctrination of all spheres of interaction.

## CONCLUSION

The new geopolitical configuration and the foreign policy of Iran in Central Asia were studied in this paper, the role and the place of Iran in contemporary international politics and Kazakh – Iranian relations were revealed, the basic laws in the dynamics of the development of Iran after the cancellation of the US sanctions were established.

The analysis of the problem of the study, the new theoretical and methodological approaches and contemporary scientific literature, the dynamics of the new geopolitics in Central Asia allow to derive the following conclusions:

1. It was proved that the relationship among the IRI and the Central Asian countries, as well as the state of the national security are determined by the geopolitical aspects, the threats, the challenges and the economic security.
2. The illegality of the statements on the threat from the part of the Iran’s nuclear policy and its influence on the Central Asian countries was proved.
3. It was proved that the cancellation of the US sanctions against Iran allowed expand the Iran’s economic presence in Central Asia followed by the possible structural changes and an the increase in the Iranian capital in the countries of Central Asia.

The problem is not how to confront the «Iranian Shiism», but how to control the process of radicalization of Islam in Central Asia, at the same time the key objectives of the regulation of this process should be the civilized aspects that should be considered in the following areas:

1. The ensuring of the protection of the national interests in the region under the new geopolitical configuration from the unwanted influx of the radical Shia ideology.

2. The solution of the relevant bilateral problems in the field of economic transit and flexible response to them in terms of cancellation of the sanctions.
3. The rational use of the new US policy in the relations with the IRI in favour of the economic interests of Kazakhstan and the Central Asian countries.
4. The efficient use of the possibilities of the Iranian market.

The aggravation of the geopolitical situation in the region of Central Asia can lead to the immeasurable social, financial and political problems for the individual Central Asian countries. In any discussion of the deconstruction of the situation in Iran and its policy in the region it is required to consider the whole range of issues. Since the policy of Iran is international, the isolation of Iran from the international community unlikely to be justified, according to the experience of the US sanctions.

Thus, the main condition for the effective development of the international relations in the Central Asian region is the cross-border cooperation.

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