

Iranian students win three titles at China robotics event

Runner-up spot no less than championship: Team manager tells Iran Daily

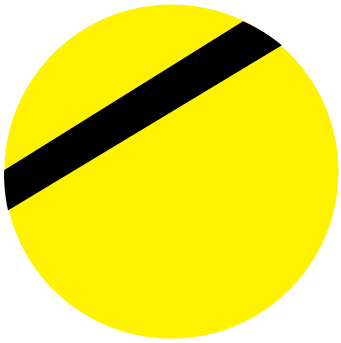
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ROBOTCHALLENGE 2022

Robotby-Senior

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



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Iran's new grand strategy and its implications for Persian Gulf security

Is Islamic Republic shifting from resistance to power-building?

By Sharareh Abdolhosseinzadeh
Political Science Researcher

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The article "Iran's New Grand Strategy: How a Remade Islamic Republic Will Reshape the Middle East," written by Narges Bajoghli and Vali Nasr for "Foreign Affairs", is one of the major recent attempts to reassess Iran's foreign policy and strategic behavior following a series of security, regional and domestic crises. The authors argue that the Islamic Republic, after experiencing extensive external pressure, war, sanctions and confrontation with regional rivals, has entered a new phase — one in which Iran is seeking to strike a balance between the ideological elements of the [1979] revolution, the imperatives of the nation-state and the geopolitical requirements of major powers. The article's central thesis is that Iran today is no longer merely a "reactive" actor that resists external pressure, but is working out a new grand strategy to preserve and expand its power. From this perspective, Tehran has moved toward a combination of nationalism, securitization, military deterrence, strategic autonomy and regional presence. In the authors' view, this shift could have an impact on the future order of the Middle East. Despite the importance of this analysis, some aspects require closer scrutiny and assessment, as there is a fundamental difference between the "ability to survive" and the "ability to turn resistance into sustainable power."

New Iran: transformation or recalibration of old strategy
One of the article's most important claims is that Iran is moving from a purely ideological Islamic Republic toward a nationalist state. The authors argue that the experience of recent crises has given greater importance to the concept of "national security" in Iranian policy, with classical elements of state power, such as territorial integrity, political independence and geopolitical position, being placed alongside revolutionary ideals. This analysis is noteworthy in one respect, because the reality is that Iran's foreign policy in recent years has increasingly become explainable through the logic of classical states. Issues such as maintaining the regional balance, foiling attempts to topple the Iranian government, developing deterrence and creating bargaining leverage point to a form of geopolitical rationality. The issue, however, is that this shift should not be interpreted as the end of ideology. The Islamic Republic has neither moved beyond ideology nor abandoned it; rather, it appears to be combining two different logics. In other words, concepts such as resistance, independence and opposition to foreign domination remain present, but they have been placed within a framework that puts greater emphasis on national interests, territorial security and regional power. Therefore, it may be more accurate to speak of a "redefinition of ideology in the service of national interests" rather than a complete replacement of ideology with nationalism.

From resistance to deterrence: shift in Iran's foreign policy logic
One of the most important changes highlighted by the article is the transformation in the concept of Iranian power. In previous decades, Iran's regional policy was largely associated with the concept of "strategic depth" and support for non-state actors across the region. But the experience of recent years has shown that Tehran is placing greater emphasis on the concept of direct deterrence. Its missile program, drone capabilities, naval capacities and network of regional partners are part of this strategy. The main objective of these tools is not necessarily to win a conventional war, but to raise the cost of any attack against Iran and create bargaining power. From this perspective, Iran's behavior following recent attacks and tensions can also be analyzed. Tehran has sought to convey two messages simultaneously: first, that it has the ability to respond and impose costs; and second, that it has no desire to get drawn into a broad and protracted war. This pattern shows that Iran's policy has increasingly moved toward "crisis management" and "controlling the level of confrontation." The most important criticism of Bajoghli and Nasr's article is that they focus more on Iran's security and geopolitical capabilities, while paying less attention to the issue of developing national power. A country's power is not defined solely by its military capabilities, geographical position

or regional networks. The economy, human capital, technology, popular support and ability to attract investment are also important components of national power. Over the past four decades, Iran has managed to achieve gains in the security and regional spheres, but at the same time it has faced serious economic challenges: declining foreign investment; limited engagement with the global economy; pressure resulting from sanctions; and domestic development problems. Therefore, the key question about the future of Iran's strategy is not whether Tehran has the ability to resist, but rather this: Can Iran turn security resistance into economic power and sustainable development? If the answer is no, the new strategy could, instead of generating sustainable power, simply become a model for permanent management of crises.
Implications of Iran's new strategy for Persian Gulf Arab states
From the perspective of Persian Gulf studies, the article's main significance lies in its regional implications. If the authors' analysis is correct, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf will need to prepare for a period in which Iran places greater emphasis on consolidating its regional position. However, the future order in the Persian Gulf will probably not be shaped solely by competition between Iran and the United States. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Oman are also redefining their roles. Three important trends can be observed

in this regard:
1. From security dependence to multilateralism
The Arab countries of the Persian Gulf have historically relied largely on US security guarantees, but in recent years they have sought to diversify their relations. Expanding economic ties with China, maintaining security cooperation with the United States and managing tensions with Iran point to a move toward a multidirectional foreign policy. Under these circumstances, even if Iran has a new strategy for expanding its regional influence, the Arab countries will not remain passive.
2. Future competition will be more geopolitical than merely military
One of the most important changes in the region is that competition is no longer solely about military power. The future of the Persian Gulf will depend on issues such as economic corridors, energy security, technology, investment and regional connectivity. Under such circumstances, the country that can establish a greater economic and connectivity role will not necessarily be the one with the greatest military capabilities.
3. Need to redefine concept of regional security
The article's analysis shows that the traditional security order in the Persian Gulf is changing. The old model, built around the United States, its Arab allies and the containment of Iran, is no longer as stable as it once was.