
On Iran-US Perspective of Relations

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<http://www.noravank.am> - 24/11/2008

B.Obama's victory in the presidential elections in the US may result changes in Washington's Near-Eastern policy. Obama's announcement about his readiness to carry on negotiations with Iran's authorities may report certain progress in Iran-US relations. Some experts are inclined to think that not only mere improvements are expected to be in Iranian-American relations, but also establishment of military cooperation.

Below are considered the problems which we think can hinder establishment of such cooperation.

One may say that 2008 became "jubilee" for discussing Iranian-American relations. In 1998, i.e. exactly 10 years ago, the US State Secretary M. Olbright announced that Washington was ready to begin a dialogue with Teheran and to step forward towards improvement of relations. After the announcement has been made, Olbright began holding active debates on possible improvements in the US-Iran relations, which haven't stop up to now, even after Ahmadinejad's election in the post of the president of the Islamic Republic.

Iraq's problems In spite of the fact that it is already a year that Iranian and American diplomats have began carrying on negotiations on Iraq, intergovernmental contradictions on the issue don't seem to be overcome. For now one can not be sure if B. Obama will keep his promise about withdrawing American troops from Iraq. In any case, the American troops are still in Iraq, and one of the main components of Washington's Near-Eastern policy remains establishing and preserving control over Iraq. The plans of Iran on this issue is not of less pretentious character especially because in comparison with the US, Iran has a quite effective and organized ally in Iraq in the face of Shiite religious and political structures, which makes a majority in the country.

As a matter of fact at present Iran and the US have the same pretension in Iraq "control and supervision. Today there is not any ground to suppose that one of the parties is ready to yield to the other and leave Iraq. If for Washington leaving this country is dangerous from the standpoint of preserving energy and regional position, for Iran minimization of participation in Iraqi developments directly threatens the state's security.

In Iraq deprived of state attributes and institutes, any process, be it a civil war, rise in Islamic Sunni radicalism or Arabic nationalism, may have direct influence on Iran. In this sense Iran is doomed to play an active role in Iraq, try to influence on the processes happening there, organize and assist local pro-Iranian Shiite structures.

Under these circumstances the possibility of Iranian-American consensus seems to be quite doubtful. In tactical issues between Iran and Teheran certain agreements are sure to be possible. However, from the strategic standpoint Iran and the US will go on remaining indirect competitors and conflicting parties of the Iraqi issue.

"Hezbollah" and Israeli issue From the standpoint of regulating on "Hezbollah" will also remain unsettled. Two years ago "Hezbollah"-Israel war showed how effective was military and financial assistance of Iran to this organization.

Today "Hezbollah" is one of the main levers of influencing Iran in the zone of Arabic- Israeli conflict, which may be used by Teheran with all its might in case of military clash with the US or Israel. It is obvious that "Hezbollah" first of all poses direct threat to Israel, and not the US.

However, it is quite doubtful that after Obama's victory the relations between the US and Israel will become cooler, all the more they will stop military cooperation. B. Obama's visit to Jerusalem and his speech at the World Jewish Congress in June of the current year where he in particular said that Jerusalem was not liable to division and belonged to Israel, have come to prove about further preservation of the US-Israel ally.

In that case the US just couldn't undertake qualitative settlement, and especially improving its relations with Iran not taking into account Israel's interests. This supposes liquidation of "Hezbollah," which is unacceptable for Iran: such requirements mean liquidation of one of the sub-units of its own army.

One shouldn't expect such improvements between the US-Iran relations which may make a conviction in Teheran that the US and Israel will not undertake anti-Iranian steps. Accordingly, Iran's assistance to "Hezbollah" will continue.

In that way the problems of "Hezbollah" and Israel also seem to be unsettled in relations between Iran and the US.

The nuclear issue Slowly but step by step Iran moves toward establishing its own nuclear military potential. It goes without saying that first of all the United States pushes the Islamic Republic to create its own nuclear power. But not only. The army of NATO's member country Turkey is better armed and more battle-worthy, Pakistan and Russia are military powers. The relations with the nuclear Pakistan remain quite problematic for Iran: political developments in that country may one day bring to the power of Isalist radicals with hostile disposition to Iran and Shi'ism. According to some experts, it is the very problem of Pakistan (from military and long-term standpoint) that makes the Iranian party to unfold the military program.

Under such circumstances, even if certain changes are reported in the US-Iran relations, they=2 0can not make Iran stop the nuclear program. At the same time, it is hardly possible to expect changes in the US position to Iran's nuclear program.

Washington can not let Iran turn into a nuclear power. It will stimulate rise of Teheran's political influence in the region and will result weakening of American position.

In that way the issue of Iran-US relations will remain conflicting, and its settlement by means of negotiations is hardly possible.

We think that the above mentioned problems will hinder qualitative settlement of Iranian-American relations. However, it doesn't mean that there will not be any positive moves. These moves will be connected with common approaches of the two countries to tactical issues " for example, making steps against activating Talibs in Afghanistan as well as weakening of position of Sunni Islamist and Al-Kaida in Iraq. In these issues Iran and the US have quite effective cooperation " in the short-term or long-term plane.

It is not excluded that the US will also stimulate Iran's energy "entry" into Europe " as a counterbalance to Russia and the EU position, which is partially conditioned by the fact that Russia is the main exporter of natural gas to Europe. After the Georgian-Russian conflict Russia's increasing influence seems to be becoming a problem of priority character for Washington, which may also solve the problem by20using Iran's pretension to become the biggest state-exporter of natural gas to the European Union.
