

The Evolution of Iran's Diplomacy in the face of Sanctions (2005 - 2023)

Научный руководитель – Belov Vladimir Ivanovich

Ranjbar Daniyal

PhD

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Факультет гуманитарных и социальных наук,
Москва, Россия

E-mail: daniealranjbar@gmail.com

Iran's diplomacy in the face of sanctions changed from 2005 to 2023 with different methods and diplomatic strategies. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, this country's values and social norms changed, and Iran entered a new area of political and economic level. However, because of the challenges of the relationship with the West, Iran faced sanctions and isolation. It is important to point out that Iran is not just dealing with unilateral sanctions made by the USA; boycotts from the EU and the UN should also be added to the sanction policy toward Iran. Although, by changing diplomatic actions and standing in the values of revolutions, Iran not just bypassed and dealt with sanctions but also today can be seen as not an isolated country in the international community. We can divide the evolution of Iran's diplomacy into three main phases.

Phase 1: Confrontation and Resistance (2005-2013)

During the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran followed the doctrine of resistance in its diplomacy toward sanctions. Ahmadinejad did not agree with the demands of the UN security council regarding Iran's nuclear program. The consequences of such diplomacy at that time brought Iran multiple rounds of sanctions from the US and international allies. Such embargoes affected Iran's economy and changed the image of this country worldwide. Although, sanctions did not force Iran to change its nuclear program. By following the values of the Islamic revolution and the advice of Iran's supreme leader, this country decided to develop alternative political and economic relations with countries like China and Russia.

Phase 2: Engagement and Negotiation (2013-2018)

By change in administration in 2013, Hassan Rouhani pushed Iran's diplomacy to engage with the international community and found solutions for Iran's nuclear issue through negotiation. The result of this diplomacy of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, which lifted many sanctions and limited Iran in case of nuclear program. The JCPOA was an important achievement for Iran to stabilize economic pressure and improve its image in the international community. Iran followed the terms of the agreement and cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, the change in US policies and withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 brought back US sanctions on Iran.

Phase 3: Confrontation and Pressure (2018-2023)

Iran's diplomacy faced another change when the US withdrew from JCPOA. Iran returned to confrontational diplomacy and began to reduce its commitment to JCPOA terms and increase its uranium enrichment. However, with all efforts and pressure from Iran, the number of sanctions increased, and economic pressure entered a new level due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, president Raeisi's diplomacy is to look more to the East and develop Ahmadinejad's efforts to improve alternative relations with countries like China and Russia.

We need to pay attention to changes in the political and economic realities to analyze the evolution of Iran's diplomacy towards sanctions between 2005 and 2023. Ahmadinejad believed that resistance was the only way to protect the country's sovereignty. But the economic pressures and sanctions toward Iran in his time pushed Iran to a negotiation policy during Rouhani's

presidency. The JCPOA counts as a successful result for Iran's diplomacy, But after the US withdrawal and reimposition of sanctions, Iran faced limited options to manage pressures and achieve sanctions relief.

The current confrontation policy of Iran can provide this country with short-term benefits. But to achieve long-term relief from sanctions, Iran needs to change its diplomacy to agree with the West's demands. However, what is clear is that from 1979 till this time, Iran changed diplomatic approaches according to the circumstances. But the important factor is that all administrations' and societies' values and norms did not change. This means that in place of dealing with Iran through realistic glasses, the international community may need to use constructivism.

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