



CLINGENDAEL FUTURES
IRAN AND THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST BY 2020
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Clingendael

Netherlands Institute of International Relations

THE FOLLOWING IS THE VISUAL SUMMARY OF FUTURES RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON IRAN & THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE NETHERLANDS.

THIS CONTENT REPRESENTS THE PUBLIC VERSION OF THE TOTAL RESEARCH—DESIGNED AS AN AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE FOR TIME-CRUNCHED POLICY-MAKERS. IN ADDITION TO CLINGENDAEL FUTURES' IN-HOUSE RESEARCH, EXTERNAL EXPERTS WERE ASSEMBLED DURING MARCH 2013 TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION AND GENERATE DATA, WHICH WAS THEN PROCESSED BY CLINGENDAEL FUTURES TO PRODUCE THE FOLLOWING SCENARIOS.

THESE SCENARIOS CONSTITUTE PART OF CLINGENDAEL FUTURES' UNIQUE RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: THEY ARE ONE FACET OF A SERIES OF DELIVERABLES AND DIALOGUES WITH RESEARCH CLIENTS IN WHICH EACH SCENARIO IS FULLY ELUCIDATED.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS PROJECT, OR WISH TO WORK WITH CLINGENDAEL FUTURES, PLEASE CONTACT:



**CLINGENDAEL FUTURES
REGINA JOSEPH
RJOSEPH@CLINGENDAEL.NL**

KEY DRIVERS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE:

POLITICAL DRIVERS

1. FRUSTRATED CITIZENRY
.....
2. FUNDAMENTAL SCHISM
OF HYBRID POLITICS
.....
3. LACK OF AUTHORITATIVE
POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

SECURITY DRIVERS

1. EMBEDDEDNESS OF
MILITARY IN POLITICAL &
ECONOMIC STRUCTURES
.....
2. ASYMMETRIC TACTICS
.....
3. INTERNAL IRGC DIVISIONS

ECONOMIC DRIVERS

1. NATURAL RESOURCE
RESILIENCE
.....
2. A SANCTIONS SQUEEZE?
.....
3. PROTECTIONISM &
FISCAL INCOMPETENCE

SOCIO-CULTURAL DRIVERS

1. THE YOUTH BULGE
.....
2. INFORMATION-AGE
CONTROL
.....
3. WAR SCARS & RETRO-
REVOLUTIONARIES

PRIMARY ENGINES OF CHANGE THAT WILL AFFECT IRAN BY 2020

ADDITIONAL DRIVERS IDENTIFIED BY ASSEMBLED EXPERTS:

INCREASING
ANTIPATHY OF
IRANIANS TOWARDS
ORGANIZED
RELIGION

IRGC INTERESTS
SHIFTING FROM
THEOCRATIC TO
ECONOMIC

EMERGENCE OF A
POLITICIAN WHO
CAN DELIVER A
NUCLEAR DEAL TO
THE WEST

EMPOWERMENT
AND INFLUENCE
OF YOUNG
IRANIAN WOMEN

GROWING LINK
BETWEEN SOCIO-
ECONOMIC POLICY &
RELIGIOUS
MODERATION

CURRENT REGIME
STRENGTHENS AS
SANCTIONS
WEAKEN MIDDLE
CLASS

**IRAN 2020
SCENARIO MATRIX:**

POLITICAL SHIFT IN IRAN

**SCENARIO ONE:
REVOLUTION 2.0**

**SCENARIO TWO:
THE ABYSS**

INCREASE IN
STABILITY IN THE
REGION

DECREASE IN
STABILITY IN THE
REGION

**SCENARIO FOUR:
TWILIGHT OF THE
CLERICS**

**SCENARIO THREE:
A DREAM DEFERRED**

NO POLITICAL SHIFT IN
IRAN

MAP OF KEY IRANIAN INTERNAL UNCERTAINTY AGAINST SCALE OF
CRITICAL REGIONAL PROBABILITY

THE END OF AN ERA IN AN UNCERTAIN REGION:

SCENARIO ONE: REVOLUTION 2.0

BY IRAN 2020:
A POLITICAL SHIFT
DOMESTICALLY AS
THE REGION
EXPERIENCES AN
INCREASE IN
STABILITY

INTERNAL DYNAMIC

IRAN IS FORCED TO TURN ITS ATTENTION INWARDS AS IRAQ AND SYRIA, BOTH RIVEN BY CIVIL WAR, ATTEMPT TO REBUILD FROM THE WEAKENED SUNNI-LED FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN

REGIONAL DYNAMIC

INCREASED REVENUES FROM OIL/GAS PRICES ALLOW GULF MONARCHIES TO KEEP PUBLIC DISSENT STANCHED THROUGH SUBSIDIES, MINOR REFORM & COVERT ACTIONS

POLITICAL

IRGC AIMS TO PRESERVE POLITICAL INFLUENCE AS IT COMES INTO CONFLICT WITH AHMED-INEJAD LEGACIES, BUT VOTERS ENTRENCH "NATIONAL" RHETORIC; REGIONAL REPAIR

SECURITY

STATUS QUO BALANCE IN NUCLEAR SANCTIONS; DIVISIONS IN IRGC WIDENS OVER HAVES & HAVE-NOTS, LEADING TO INTERNAL SCHISMS AND STRUCTURAL WEAKENING

ECONOMIC

ALTHOUGH OIL/GAS PRICES GO UP, PROLONGED SANCTIONS TRIGGER ECONOMIC COLLAPSE, SKILLED BRAIN DRAIN & RISE OF BLACK ECONOMIES

SOCIO-CULTURAL

ECONOMIC COLLAPSE AND SANCTION DEPRIVATION IGNITE PUBLIC ANGER; MODERNITY AMONG YOUTH CLASS HASTENS REJECTION OF CLERICAL AUTHORITY

SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS:

- POLITICAL PROXIES IN SUPPORT OF AHMEDINEJAD-LED CAMPAIGN TO SERVE THE "STATE" RATHER THAN THEOCRACY RALLY SUPPORT OF A CYNICAL AND EXHAUSTED CITIZENRY. A "SOFT REVOLUTION" ENDS THE LEGITIMACY AND POWER OF THE CLERICAL AUTHORITY IN A RENUNCIATION OF VELAYAT-E-FAQIH
- ALTHOUGH THE GREATER REGION IS NOT PEACEFUL, AN OPPOSITIONAL GOVERNMENT IN PLACE IN SYRIA AND A SUNNI-LED IRAQ TRY TO PICK UP THE PIECES AFTER YEARS OF WAR.
- A STATUS QUO BALANCE BETWEEN IRAN AND P5+1 KEEPS ISRAEL & FURTHER PROLIFERATION AT BAY, BUT SANCTIONS HASTEN PUBLIC DEMAND FOR POLITICAL RELIEF FROM ECONOMY

A VISION OF DESTRUCTIVE CHANGE AND CONFLICT:

SCENARIO TWO: **THE ABYSS**

BY IRAN 2020:
A POLITICAL SHIFT
DOMESTICALLY AS
THE REGION
EXPERIENCES A
DECREASE IN
STABILITY

INTERNAL DYNAMIC

DEMOGRAPHICS HASTEN SCHISM WITHIN THEOCRACY, AS YOUNGER ELITES ASSERT MORE RADICAL VIEWS. THIS TRIGGERS AN IRGC-LED POLICE STATE

REGIONAL DYNAMIC

SYRIAN WAR TRIGGERS WIDER REGIONAL SECTARIAN CONFLICT; AL QAEDA STRONGER; GULF MONARCHIES WEAKENED/OVERTHROWN BY POPULIST & SALAFIST ATTACKS

POLITICAL

KHAMANEI DIES JUST BEFORE HE REACHES 80 IN 2020, WHICH SPAWNS CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY AMONG CLERICS. REPRESSION AND BRUTALITY INCREASE

SECURITY

MILITARY FORCES BOLSTER ASYMMETRICAL CAPACITY, RESULTING IN GREATER EXTERNAL CLASHES FROM DRONE AND CYBERATTACKS AGAINST SAUDI, ISRAELI AND US INTERESTS

ECONOMIC

LACK OF INVESTMENT AND FISCAL MISMANAGEMENT RESULT IN LONG-TERM DAMAGE TO IRAN'S ENERGY SECTOR AND CRIPPLE COUNTRY'S FUTURE COMPETITIVENESS

SOCIO-CULTURAL

EXODUS OF SKILLED IRANIANS TO C.A.R./CAUCASUS/US EXACERBATES SOCIAL GAP; VICE, CRIME AND UNDERWORLD ACTIVITY INCREASE; SOCIAL FABRIC UNRAVELS

SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS:

- AFTER KHAMENEI'S DEATH, IRAN CANNOT SETTLE ON A LEGITIMATE SUCCESSOR AS SUPREME LEADER. THE IRGC MAKES A JUDICIARY-SUPPORTED POWER-GRAB BEHIND A CLERICAL PROXY.
- TO HANG ON TO INFLUENCE VIA HEZBOLLAH/HAMAS/IRAQ IN A SUNNI-DOMINANT REGION, BY 2020 IRAN BECOMES AN IRGC/MILITARY-LED POLICE STATE
- IRAQ DISINTEGRATES INTO 3 OPPOSED PARTS. LEBANON, JORDAN, EGYPT, TURKEY AND ISRAEL PULLED INTO REGIONAL WAR AS SYRIAN CONFLICT WORSENS; NORTH AFRICA STILL UNSTABLE
- CONFLICT, DISEASE AND NATURAL DISASTERS COMPOUND IRAN'S INABILITY TO RISE AGAIN

NO REFORM AND NO STABILITY FOR IRAN'S PEOPLE:

SCENARIO THREE:

A DREAM DEFERRED

BY IRAN 2020:
NO DOMESTIC
POLITICAL SHIFT AS
THE REGION
EXPERIENCES A
DECREASE IN
STABILITY

INTERNAL DYNAMIC

POPULIST HOPES FOR REFORM AFTER THE 2013 & 2017 ELECTIONS ARE DASHED WHEN KHAMANEI ELIMINATES SUFFRAGE FOR PRESIDENT AND CONSOLIDATES THEOCRATIC POWER

REGIONAL DYNAMIC

CONTAINED CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA TRIGGERS NORTH-SOUTH PARTITION; ASSAD IS GONE, BUT SECTARIAN VIOLENCE REMAINS INTACT; HIS DEPARTURE LEAVES IRAN VULNERABLE

POLITICAL

ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONARY ADHERENTS RETRENCH IN THE WAKE OF ASSAD'S OUSTER; IRAN INTENSIFIES EFFORTS TO RETAIN SHIA INFLUENCE THROUGH MANUEVERS IN IRAQ & LEBANON

SECURITY

THROUGH THE IRGC, IRAN "DOUBLES DOWN" ON USE OF HEZBOLLAH TO EXTEND INFLUENCE; FORWARD DEFENSE STRATEGY INVENTS NEW PROXIES

ECONOMIC

A WATER CRISIS WORSENS IRAN'S ECONOMIC POSITION; RELIANCE ON RUSSIA FOR WATER PROVISION, CHINA, BRAZIL AND INDIA FOR OTHER NECESSITIES, TO KEEP THE STATE INTACT

SOCIO-CULTURAL

POPULATION HUNKERS DOWN IN A DAY-TO-DAY COMPETITION FOR SURVIVAL; THEY NO LONGER HARBOR STRENGTH FOR INITIATING CHANGE; APATHY PREVAILS

SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS:

- KHAMANEI, BOLSTERED BY IRGC, CONCENTRATES POWER IN THE HANDS OF THE CLERGY BY REMOVING PUBLIC VOICE THROUGH VOTE ON PRESIDENT
- **DEPENDENCE ON BRICS AND OTHERS FOR VITAL RESOURCES, PARADOXICALLY INTENSIFIES 'SELF-SUFFICIENCY' RHETORIC—AND THUS POWER—OF CLERIC PERSPECTIVE**
- **REGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL PROXY CONTROL INTENSIFIES AS CONTAINED WAR IN SYRIA PUSHES IRAN TOWARDS MORE AGGRESSIVE AND COVERT MEANS TO MAINTAIN INFLUENCE**
- **SYRIAN WAR, THE COUNTRY'S PARTITION AND ASSAD'S DEPARTURE MAKE IRAN MORE INFLEXIBLE OVER NUCLEAR STANDOFF; ALSO INCREASES MEDDLING IN SAUDI ARABIA & YEMEN**

A WAR'S END AND A PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSITION:

SCENARIO FOUR: TWILIGHT OF THE CLERICS

BY IRAN 2020:
NO DOMESTIC
POLITICAL SHIFT AS
THE REGION
EXPERIENCES AN
INCREASE IN
STABILITY

INTERNAL DYNAMIC

A RESPITE FROM CONFLICT AND INSTABILITY AMONG REGIONAL NEIGHBORS KEEPS REGIME INTACT, BUT ITS RELEVANCE TO THE PUBLIC ON THE DECLINE

REGIONAL DYNAMIC

A FRAGILE NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IN SYRIA IS COMPLETED; EVEN SO, THE REGION STRUGGLES UNDER SECTARIAN FLARE-UPS (WHICH IRAN CONTINUES TO ENFLAME)

POLITICAL

KHAMANEI SUCCESSOR MORE RADICAL IN IDEOLOGY, WHICH LEADS TO INCREASING AMBIVALENCE AMONG CITIZENS FOR THE ROLE OF THE SUPREME LEADER

SECURITY

ITS CHANNELS TO SYRIA/LEBANON/PALESTINE/IRAQ INTACT, IRGC TURNS FOCUS AWAY FROM WAR ALERT STATUS TO ECONOMIC INTERESTS FOR SELF-GAIN

ECONOMIC

MASSIVE GAS RESERVES IN IRAN ARE EXPLOITED WITH IRAQ'S HELP, THEREBY IMPROVING FINANCIAL RESERVES, INFRASTRUCTURAL UPGRADING & EMPLOYMENT FIGURES

SOCIO-CULTURAL

SYRIAN RESOLUTION & BETTER JOB PROSPECTS EMPOWER PSYCHOLOGICAL RELIEF AMONG CITIZENS; TECHNOLOGY & MODERNITY SPUR SEA-CHANGES & NEW CHARISMATIC LEADERS

SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS:

- **ALTHOUGH IRAN'S HYBRID REPUBLICAN THEOCRACY REMAINS INTACT BY 2020, PROGRESS RESULTING FROM A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT IN SYRIA PROMOTES STABILITY AT BOTH THE DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL LEVEL; BREAKTHROUGH IN US-IRAN BILATERAL NUCLEAR DISCUSSION**
- **THEOCRATIC LEGITIMACY ON THE WANE DUE TO DEMOGRAPHIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE**
- **IMPROVED MANEUVERABILITY FOR IRAN IN BOTH SYRIA AND IRAQ ALLOW IT TO EXPLOIT BOTH LEGITIMATE (ENERGY) AND ILLEGITIMATE (TRANSNATIONAL CRIME) MEANS FOR FINANCIAL GAIN, WHICH CONSEQUENTLY IMPROVES THE PUBLIC OUTLOOK**

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS



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REGINA JOSEPH
RJOSEPH@CLINGENDAEL.NL**