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# Examining the Future of the Region Based on Geopolitical, Economic, and Military Changes

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## ABSTRACT

Geopolitical, economic, and military developments in recent decades have profoundly transformed the structure of power in the Middle East and West Asia. In this context, Iran, as one of the main regional actors, plays a decisive role in shaping the political and security future of this geographical sphere. Using a futures studies approach and drawing on the PESTEL analytical model and the method of strategic scenario writing, the present study examines the trends and driving forces that will affect Iran's position in regional developments during the period from 2025 to 2035. The research data were collected based on statistics and credible reports from international organizations, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and the International Energy Agency (IEA), and were evaluated in three geopolitical, economic, and military domains through qualitative content analysis and scenario planning. The findings indicate that shifts in regional alliances, developments in the global energy market, the advancement of defense technologies, and sanctions policies are four key variables shaping the future trajectory of the region. Accordingly, three probable scenarios are presented: "strengthening Iran's strategic role and consolidating its regional position," "the continuation of pressures and the relative decline of influence," and "a transition toward multilateral regional cooperation." A comparative examination of these scenarios suggests that foreign policy flexibility, diversification of the national economy, and the development of technology-oriented defense capabilities will be the most important factors for success in confronting a challenging future. These findings can provide a basis for Iran's macro-level policymaking and national security strategies in the coming decade.

**Keywords:** *futures studies, geopolitics, regional economy, military balance, Iran, scenario planning*

## Introduction

Geopolitical, economic, and military developments over recent decades have transformed the landscape of the Middle East and West Asia; a region in which the Islamic Republic of Iran, due to its privileged geographical position, major energy resources, and ideological-cultural influence, has become one of the key actors (1). This position is the result of a combination of hard geopolitical capacities, such as geographical location and energy resources, and



soft capacities, such as ideological role-playing after the Islamic Revolution, which has elevated Iran from a peripheral actor to an independent actor in the international system (2).

This position, however, has taken shape within a competitive and multilayered context; a competition that, on the one hand, is unfolding among Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey and, on the other hand, has acquired more complex dimensions through the presence of extra-regional powers such as the United States, Russia, and China (3). Each of these actors, through different models of regional order-building, seeks to gain superiority and consolidate its position. The influence of this process by the structure of the international system, which is moving from a unipolar condition toward multipolar or “uni-multipolar” patterns, has caused economic, energy-related, and technological components to become as important as military components in defining power (4, 5).

In this context, Iran, through its control of key energy routes such as the Strait of Hormuz (6) and its proximity to the world’s largest oil and gas reserves, possesses a strategic opportunity to manage global energy security and achieve economic gains. Nevertheless, the pressure of economic sanctions and the presence of foreign military forces, particularly American forces and naval coalitions in the Persian Gulf, constitute serious threats to the full utilization of these capacities (4).

Geostrategic developments in the region, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the crises in Syria and Yemen, developments in the global energy market, and changes in United States policy from the JCPOA to the revival of maximum pressure, have made the future outlook more complex (2, 7). All these factors further intensify the necessity of employing futures studies approaches so that, based on the identification of “drivers” and “key uncertainties,” scenarios can be formulated for the future of Iran’s position (1, 8).

Accordingly, the main research question of the present study is as follows: “What will the future of the Middle East and West Asia be like in light of geopolitical, economic, and military changes, with Iran as the central focus?” Answering this question depends on the systematic analysis of key trends, the assessment of opportunities and challenges, and the presentation of a strategic framework for enhancing Iran’s position.

## Research Background

### *Geopolitical Axis*

Mirhosseini and Ivazi (2019), in a comprehensive futures-oriented study, used a scenario-writing approach based on critical uncertainty to identify the fundamental and highly volatile variables that have the greatest impact on the geopolitical position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in West Asia. In their analytical model, among dozens of examined factors, two factors received the greatest weight and significance: first, relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia as two major regional powers that present different patterns of security and political order; and second, the extent and manner of United States interventions in the political, security, and economic developments of the region. Due to their direct connection with power structures and their influence on a network of more subsidiary variables, these two factors have been introduced as key drivers whose change in direction or intensity can fundamentally transform the regional balance of power in the short and medium term (1).

In the same direction, Zein al-Abedin and Jamshidpour (2020), with a prospective perspective and within the framework of geopolitical futures studies, conducted an in-depth study analyzing three main drivers: war as a factor that produces insecurity and changes the boundaries and scope of countries’ influence; the position of Arab countries, which, due to their geography, energy resources, and political-security linkages, play a decisive role in

shaping regional equations; and oil as a strategic commodity that simultaneously constitutes an economic opportunity and a political pressure instrument. The findings of this study show that the balance of power in the Islamic world emerges not at a single level, but from the tripartite interaction among national, regional, and global levels, and that transformation at any one level can lead to changes in Iran's security and geopolitical environment. In other words, internal developments in regional countries, the formation of alliances and competitions at the regional level, and the policies of global powers are all connected like links in a chain, and their reciprocal effects determine the final shape of the balance of power. This combined approach has enabled their study to provide a more precise understanding of geopolitical dynamics and to depict future prospects with greater clarity and coherence (7).

### *Economic Axis*

Elhami and Shamlou (2020), in a descriptive-analytical study aimed at identifying geopolitical-economic factors affecting the defense strategies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf, showed that vast oil and gas reserves are not merely an economic component, but rather, as a geopolitical factor, play a vital role in determining Iran's position in regional security equations. They argue that Iran's geographical position and proximity to the world's largest hydrocarbon reserves have placed the country at the center of debates on energy security, thereby creating a dual condition: on the one hand, extensive opportunities for revenue generation and political influence, and on the other hand, vulnerability to external pressures and restrictions (2).

The analysis of Elhami and Shamlou also emphasizes the consequences of economic sanctions, especially after the intensification of policies by the United States and its allies. These sanctions have targeted not only the flow of energy exports, but have also severely restricted banking, insurance, transportation, and even investment in energy infrastructure. Within this framework, Iran's ability to employ its energy resources to advance defense and national security interests has become directly dependent on the country's capacity to circumvent or reduce the effects of these restrictions (2).

These findings are consistent with energy-security analyses that consider economic security and stability in the global energy market to be dependent on the role of countries with vast reserves, such as Iran (4). These analyses emphasize that any disruption in the supply of oil and gas in the Persian Gulf region, particularly in the Strait of Hormuz, can affect global prices in the shortest possible time. They also introduce Iran as one of the vital nodes in the future architecture of the energy market (4, 6).

At the international level, Bani Salameh (2023) regards energy security not merely as an economic component, but as a powerful geopolitical instrument capable of shaping or transforming bilateral and multilateral relations. According to his findings, movements in the global energy market—from price fluctuations to changes in transmission routes—directly affect the foreign-policy decision-making of countries such as Iran. In other words, fluctuations in the global market can expand or restrict Iran's diplomatic room for maneuver, depending on the extent to which the country can use its energy resources as a bargaining instrument (4).

Domestic studies after 2018 also confirm this approach and emphasize that the United States' "maximum pressure" policy against Iran was designed in such a way as to minimize the country's ability to use the energy economy as a political and strategic lever by sharply reducing oil revenues. Nevertheless, analyses indicate that Iran, by adopting strategies such as diversifying export markets toward East and Southeast Asia, using barter trade,

and drawing on the capacity of the private sector and intermediary companies, has contained part of the effects of sanctions (2, 4).

In summary, the economic axis in Iran's defense strategy is a combination of the geopolitical advantages of energy resources and the structural challenges caused by external pressures. Any successful policymaking in this area requires the simultaneous pursuit of two paths: first, sustainable investment in energy infrastructure and production and export capacities; and second, the design of diplomatic and economic initiatives to reduce vulnerability to imposed shocks and restrictions. Such a combination can consolidate and even enhance Iran's position in regional defense-security equations.

### *Military-Security Axis*

In the military-security dimension, studies on the military balance in the Persian Gulf have examined changes in the military power of Gulf littoral states with a special focus on two main trends: first, the modernization and upgrading of military equipment through large-scale arms purchases; and second, the creation and strengthening of extra-regional military alliances, which are primarily linked to the presence and support of the United States and some Western allies (5). These analyses emphasize that extensive arms investments in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar not only alter the regional balance of power, but also create space for new military and security competitions (5).

The studies of Elhami and Shamlou (2020), in line with these findings, have also assessed the presence of foreign forces in the region as a continuous threat to the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. They argue that the establishment of foreign military bases, especially along the southern coasts of the Persian Gulf, limits Iran's strategic room for maneuver and contributes to the continuation of a security structure dependent on external actors (2).

On the other hand, the study by Sarkhoshpour et al. (2026), using a regional security approach, examined the importance of Iran's naval presence in the Strait of Hormuz and introduced it as an instrument with a dual function: first, as a military deterrence instrument capable of imposing heavy costs on any threat or hostile action; and second, as a mechanism for gaining geopolitical superiority that enables Iran to consolidate its role in controlling a vital energy-transfer passage (6).

Moreover, the study by Zein al-Abedin and Jamshidpour (2020) addressed security threats arising from the growth of extremism, political instability, and the expansion of non-state armed groups in neighboring countries. They warn that these issues can affect Iran's national security depth like a chain reaction and may even alter the existing security balance to Iran's disadvantage. Accordingly, managing these threats requires a combination of military capability, geopolitical vigilance, and active regional diplomacy in order to prevent unfavorable changes in the balance of power (7).

**Table 1. Research Background**

| Axis        | Key Sources | Summary of Findings  |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| Geopolitics | (3, 7)      | Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are considered a key variable in geopolitical changes in the Persian Gulf.<br>The role of extra-regional actors, especially the United States and China, is highly influential in changing the regional balance of power.<br>Drivers such as war, oil, and the direct and indirect interventions of major powers can shape the future of the region. |

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|                 |          |  |
|-----------------|----------|--|
| <b>Economic</b> | (2, 4)   | <p>Scenario writing based on critical uncertainty is regarded as an important method for depicting the probable future conditions of the region.</p> <p>The vast oil and gas reserves of Iran and regional countries have simultaneously created geopolitical opportunities and threats.</p> <p>Economic sanctions, especially those imposed by the United States, have restricted the flow of energy exports, investment, and infrastructure development.</p> <p>Energy security, as a geopolitical instrument, plays an important and influential role in Iran's foreign policy.</p>   |
| <b>Military</b> | (2, 5-7) | <p>Strategies such as diversifying export markets, using barter trade, and employing the capacity of the private sector have been used to reduce the effects of sanctions.</p> <p>Gulf littoral states have intensified the modernization of their armaments and the creation of extra-regional alliances, especially with the United States.</p> <p>The presence of foreign forces is recognized as a persistent threat to Iran's national security.</p> <p>Iran's naval presence in the Strait of Hormuz has a deterrent function and is considered an instrument for consolidating geopolitical superiority.</p> <p>The growth of extremism and political instability in neighboring countries can alter the security balance to Iran's disadvantage.</p> |

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### Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The PESTEL model (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal) is one of the most well-known frameworks for macro-environmental analysis, which has been used by business consulting agencies since the 1980s and later in political science and international relations (9). In the present study, PESTEL is used as a tool for the systematic identification and classification of variables affecting the three geopolitical, economic, and military axes of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the regional and extra-regional environment.

In the political dimension, factors such as changes of governments in the region, the foreign policy of the United States, and alliance-building patterns among Persian Gulf states become important (3, 7).

The economic dimension addresses trends in the global energy market, sanctions, and emerging economic convergences (2, 4).

The social dimension includes young demographic patterns, identity and ethnic changes, and the influence of public opinion on regional foreign policy (4).

The technological dimension includes military advances, cyber warfare, and indigenous missile systems, which directly affect the military balance of power (5).

The environmental dimension focuses on the importance of strategic waterways, climate change, and environmental risks in the Persian Gulf.

The legal dimension refers to maritime legal regimes, security treaties, and international arms-control frameworks.

The GESI model (Geopolitical, Economic, Security, Institutional), which has been proposed by some Iranian researchers to indigenize macro-analysis in the field of national security, complements PESTEL and, by emphasizing four driving domains, provides greater analytical integration for combined geopolitical-economic-military studies (2).

In the geopolitical dimension, the GESI model enables the assessment of regional competitions over hegemony, geographical position, and control of strategic passages such as the Strait of Hormuz (1).

The economic dimension, in addition to resource and energy-trade capacities, addresses transit networks and the effects of sanctions on national development indicators (2, 4).

The security dimension pays attention to hard threats, such as the presence of foreign forces and the modernization of Gulf countries' fleets, as well as soft threats, such as psychological operations and cognitive warfare (5, 6).

The institutional dimension highlights the role of legal structures, multilateral diplomacy, and the capacity of regional institutions such as OPEC and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The combination of PESTEL and GESI as the theoretical-conceptual framework of this study creates a dual advantage: first, comprehensive coverage of factors that are outside the direct control of national actors; and second, alignment of these factors with the requirements of national security and the strategic objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This framework provides a basis for scenario writing based on critical uncertainties (10) and enables comparative testing of the results with similar international studies, especially in the South China Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean.

### *Conceptual Model*

The conceptual model of the present study is designed by combining the two PESTEL and GESI frameworks in order to show the relationship between macro-environmental drivers and the specific geopolitical, economic, and security-military dimensions of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the national, regional, and extra-regional levels. The outer ring of the model explains the six macro PESTEL factors, including political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal variables, which are largely beyond the direct control of national actors. The inner ring, based on GESI, addresses four categories: geopolitical, economic, security, and institutional, which have a closer connection with policymaking and domestic capacities. The three main axes of the research—geopolitical, economic, and military—are located at the center and are connected through bidirectional pathways to the outer and inner dimensions so that the reciprocal effects of environmental and structural factors on one another become clear. This design not only highlights causal relations, but also makes it possible to analyze cross-impact effects simultaneously.



**Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study based on the combination of the PESTEL and GESI frameworks in analyzing the geopolitical, economic, and military drivers of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the regional and extra-regional environment.**

## Research Method

This study is applied in nature and is designed with a futures studies approach based on scenario analysis. The scenario-writing approach, especially under conditions in which the future is characterized by high uncertainties, makes it possible to identify possible trajectories of transformation and formulate strategies appropriate to each scenario (10).

### *Methodological Framework*

First, the drivers and key variables affecting the geopolitical, economic, and military position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the regional and extra-regional environment were extracted through documentary study and systematic content analysis. Then, using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with experts in international relations and security studies, the degree of importance and uncertainty of each driver was evaluated. These data were analyzed using MICMAC software to draw the cross-impact matrix (11).

### *Data Sources*

Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained from three main categories:

1. International organizations: official statistics and reports related to economic, energy, and military indicators.
2. Analytical and academic sources: domestic and foreign scholarly articles published in reputable journals such as *Geopolitics Quarterly*, *Journal of Politics and International Relations*, and *Political Research of the Islamic World*.
3. Statistical data and databases: global trade, energy, and military expenditure databases.

### *Research Implementation Stages*

1. Identification of drivers through a review of the literature and previous experiences (2, 3).
2. Evaluation of the importance and uncertainty of drivers using a two-round Delphi method.
3. Cross-impact analysis to determine interactions among drivers.
4. Formulation of probable scenarios using the two drivers with the highest importance and uncertainty.
5. Development of strategies appropriate to each scenario based on national, regional, and international considerations.

### *Data Analysis*

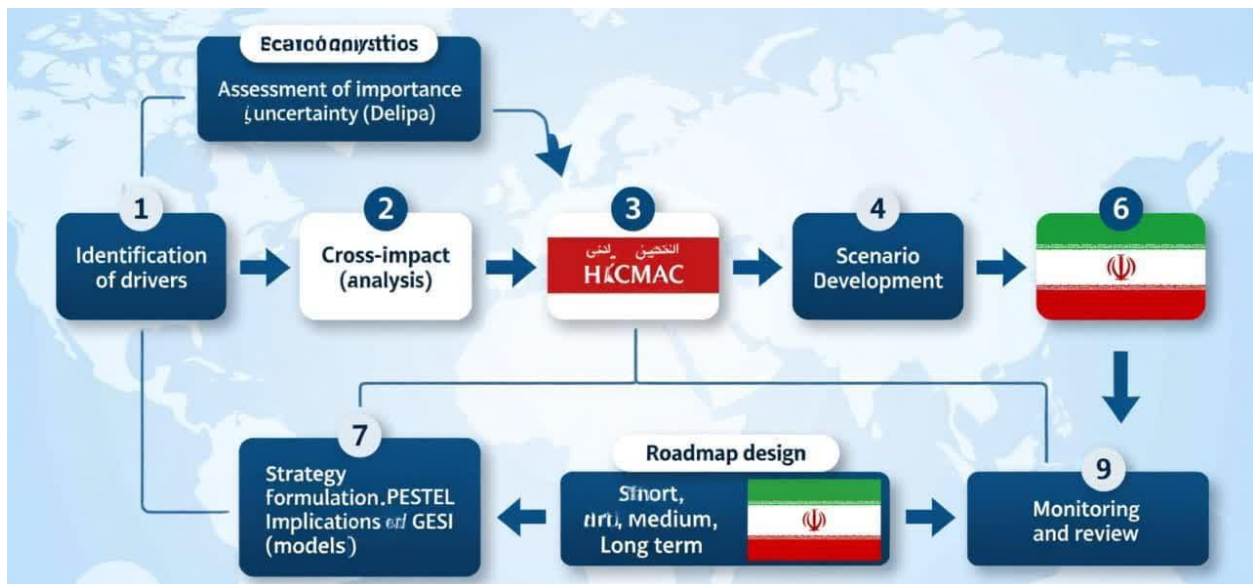
Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods and software tools such as SPSS and Excel. Qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis and open and axial coding. The validity and reliability of the instruments were assessed through Cronbach's alpha test and expert-based content validity.

The use of this research method made it possible for the results to rely on valid and up-to-date data while also enjoying high theoretical and practical coherence and maintaining adaptability to future developments.

### Research Method Flowchart

This flowchart shows the step-by-step process of the research method, beginning with the identification of influential drivers and, after cross-impact analysis and the assessment of importance and uncertainty, entering the scenario-development stage. Then, through the design of strategies based on the PESTEL and GESI models, the short-term, medium-term, and long-term roadmap is drawn. Finally, continuous monitoring and revision ensure that strategies are updated in accordance with environmental changes.

The direction of the arrows and the sequence of stages highlight the cyclical nature of this research; in the sense that monitoring results can directly lead to the revision of drivers or scenarios.



**Figure 2. Research method flowchart, including the stages of driver identification, cross-impact analysis, assessment of importance and uncertainty, scenario formulation, strategy design based on the PESTEL and GESI models, roadmap development, and the process of monitoring and revision.**

### Three-Dimensional Comparative Analysis Based on the PESTEL and GESI Theoretical Framework

In the dynamic environment of West Asia, geopolitical, economic, and military changes significantly overlap and affect one another. These three domains not only play a role in shaping regional opportunities and threats, but also directly influence the strategic position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the future power system. Separate analysis of each of these dimensions makes it possible to gain a more precise understanding of forthcoming trends and scenarios.

#### Geopolitical Changes

In recent years, the structure of power in West Asia has been undergoing a noticeable transformation; a shift from a relatively America-centered order toward regional and extra-regional multipolar arrangements is evident (3). The development of relations between some Arab countries and Israel and the formation of arrangements such as the Abraham Accords have led to the rearrangement of alliances and the redistribution of influence in the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean (1). At the same time, the emergence of middle powers with independent

approaches, including Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, has further complicated alliance and rivalry networks in the region (2).

The growing influence of China and Russia in security and economic arenas, including through routes such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Belt and Road project, has to some extent shifted the geopolitical orientation of the region toward the East (3, 4). In contrast, the military and hegemonic presence of the United States in the Persian Gulf and the maintenance of certain bases and naval alliances indicate that traditional Western influence remains a determining factor (5).

In addition, the trend of reducing tensions and moving toward diplomatic interactions between Tehran and Riyadh has important geopolitical consequences: this rapprochement could potentially redefine regional security and economic cooperation patterns, but because of deep levels of historical mistrust, the sustainability of this trend remains uncertain (1, 3).

### *Economic Changes*

The geoeconomic rearrangements of the region are influenced by several long-term currents: first, the efforts of Persian Gulf countries to diversify their economies and reduce dependence on oil revenues through development and industrialization programs; and second, changes in global trade routes and the strengthening of regional transit projects, including the North-South Corridor, which strengthen Iran's position as a Eurasia-Persian Gulf transit node and create new opportunities for revenue generation and geoeconomic influence (4, 6).

Third, economic sanctions and restricted access to Western markets have compelled Iran to expand its trade and investment relations toward the East; increased commercial cooperation with China and India is a clear example of this shift (2). At the same time, the growth of regional investments in infrastructure, technology, and renewable energies has strengthened the competitive position of Persian Gulf littoral states and increased their capacity to influence foreign policy economically (4). These developments have redefined the economic ecosystem of the region and turned economic instruments into a central component of geopolitical competition (2, 4).

### *Military Changes*

Military developments in West Asia indicate an increase in technological diversity and strategic complexity. Persian Gulf countries, through heavy investments in the modernization of their air and naval forces and the purchase of advanced systems from Western actors, have upgraded their operational capabilities (5). In contrast, the Islamic Republic of Iran has focused on developing ballistic missile, drone, and air-defense capacities in order to strengthen its regional deterrence; this trend is one of the main factors in maintaining the deterrence balance in the region (5).

At the same time, the continuous presence of United States naval forces and its allies in securing maritime navigation, as well as the development of security-intelligence cooperation between Israel and some Arab countries, has increased the complexity of Iran's operational environment (3, 5). Proxy battlefields in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq remain arenas for testing hybrid warfare tactics and instruments, including electronic warfare, cyber operations, and the use of proxy forces (5).

At the technological level, the penetration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence into command-and-control systems, as well as the development of advanced weapons, transforms the structure of military power and increases the necessity of revising regional defense strategies (5, 8). For Iran, control of strategic chokepoints

such as the Strait of Hormuz and the preservation of naval and asymmetric operational capabilities remain among the pillars of defense strategy and continue to function as strategic leverage in regional disputes (4, 6).

### Future Scenarios of the Region and Iran's Role

The future outlook of West Asia can be divided into several main scenarios based on macro security, economic, and geopolitical currents. The first scenario is gradual regional convergence, accompanied by a reduction in political tensions among major powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia and an increase in multilateral economic and security cooperation (2, 3). In this path, organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union can play a driving role in regional interactions (3).

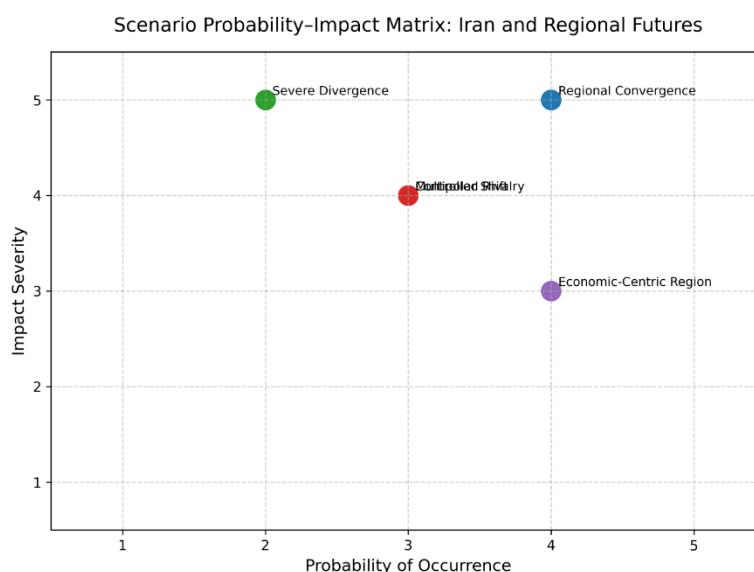
The second scenario is controlled confrontation; that is, despite the continuation of geopolitical competition, diplomatic and economic channels remain open to prevent comprehensive crises (1). In this situation, Iran, by using defensive deterrence instruments and active diplomacy, seeks to preserve its influence in the axis of resistance and stabilize energy-export and trade routes (5).

The third scenario is a return to severe divergence, in which ideological gaps, arms competition, and proxy wars intensify (5, 7). This situation can increase the risk of direct conflict and have major negative effects on energy security, foreign investment, and the internal stability of regional countries.

The fourth scenario is a transition toward a regional multipolar order with the presence of Eastern powers; a condition in which China and Russia, through investment and security cooperation instruments, replace part of American influence (3, 4). In such a scenario, Iran can strengthen its role as a connecting link among trade and energy routes by deepening strategic relations with these powers (6).

The fifth scenario is regional economy-centeredness, whose main axes are income diversification, renewable energies, and the development of digital infrastructure (4). Iran, by using its geographical advantages and human resources, can become one of the main actors in regional transit and technology networks (6).

Overall, Iran's role in each scenario depends on its ability to integrate hard and soft power, exploit its geostrategic position, and create flexible alliances (1). The future of the region will likely be a combination of the above scenarios, formed in complex interaction with global and domestic developments.



**Figure 3. Probability-impact matrix of future regional scenarios and Iran's role (2019–2025), based on scenario-writing analysis grounded in critical uncertainty.**

This matrix compares five key scenarios according to two dimensions, “probability of occurrence” and “intensity of impact”: 1. gradual regional convergence, 2. controlled confrontation, 3. severe divergence, 4. Eastern-centered multipolar order, and 5. regional economy-centeredness (3, 5, 6).

Iran's geopolitical position in West Asia is the result of the intersection of three main dimensions: the economic situation, including energy resources, sanctions, and income diversification; geopolitical factors, including relations with regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey and the extent of extra-regional interventions by the United States, Russia, and China; and military capacities, including naval deterrence, missile capability, and asymmetric power. Scenario writing based on two central uncertainties—“Iran-Saudi relations” and “the level of United States intervention in the region”—presents four probable future pathways, each of which has different consequences for regional influence, internal stability, and the country's economic space.

**Key Consequences**

- Dependence on oil revenues and sanctions limits foreign-policy capacity and military expenditure.
- Regional competition and extra-regional involvement increase the risk of an arms race and proxy conflicts.
- Reducing tensions with neighbors can create a window of opportunity for economic and transit cooperation and for strengthening the regional position.

- Economic and institutional resilience, including income diversification, transparency, and reserve management, determines Iran's ability to benefit from the positive opportunities of scenarios.

1. Negotiation and permanent diplomatic channels with key neighbors, including Saudi Arabia and Turkey.
2. Strengthening smart deterrence with an emphasis on asymmetric capabilities, including naval, cyber, and electronic capabilities.
3. Accelerating the reduction of oil dependence and developing non-oil exports.
4. Economic diplomacy for the development of transit corridors and regional trade agreements.
5. Establishing mechanisms for reducing military risk and regional early-warning channels.
6. Institutional reforms in the management of oil revenues and foreign-exchange reserves, with an emphasis on transparency and efficiency.
7. Investment in human capital and social support networks for internal resilience.
8. Designing a joint regional fund or mechanism for managing energy shocks and reconstructing infrastructure.
9. Establishing a national-regional center for scenario writing and driver monitoring as an early-warning mechanism.
10. Conducting cost-benefit assessments and defining key performance indicators (KPIs) for each policy before implementation.

Maintaining and enhancing Iran's position in the region requires a combination of flexible foreign policy, strengthened economic resilience, and intelligent selection of defense options. Scenario writing and continuous monitoring of drivers will be central instruments for designing effective policies under conditions of uncertainty.

## Conclusion

The geopolitical position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in West Asia is the product of a complex and dynamic interaction among three dimensions: the economy, geopolitics, and military capability. Continued dependence on oil revenues and sanctions pressure limit the country's political and economic room for maneuver while simultaneously creating a strong incentive for economic diversification. Regional relations, especially relations with Saudi Arabia, and the level of intervention by extra-regional actors such as the United States, Russia, and China act as determining drivers and demonstrate the central role of uncertainty in shaping future pathways. Iran's military capability, especially its asymmetric and naval capacities, is an instrument of influence and deterrence; however, without sustainable economic and institutional support, its effectiveness will be more limited. Scenario writing shows that reducing tensions and increasing regional cooperation have the greatest potential for enhancing economic welfare and consolidating geopolitical position, whereas intensifying rivalries creates the conditions for arms races and proxy crises. Therefore, the desirable strategy is a combination of active regional diplomacy, economic policies resilient against shocks, and targeted investment in asymmetric defense and non-oil infrastructure. Strengthening institutions, transparency in resource management, and planning based on key performance indicators (KPIs) are necessary conditions for the success of these strategies. At the practical level, priority should be given to reducing economic vulnerability, establishing stable diplomatic channels, and developing low-cost deterrent capacities. Implementing this path requires continuous assessment, domestic agreement on priorities, and constructive interaction with neighbors and regional actors. Ultimately, employing a scenario-writing approach and monitoring drivers as a framework for managing uncertainty increases Iran's chances of preserving and enhancing its regional role in the coming decades.

In response to the question raised at the beginning of the article, it can be stated that Iran's geopolitical position will change by the horizon of the study, but the direction and intensity of this change depend on two key variables: the quality of Iran-Saudi relations and the level of United States intervention in the region. If regional relations improve and extra-regional interventions decrease, Iran can use its geographical position for economic-political gains and acquire a stronger interregional role; however, under the scenario of intensified rivalries and increased foreign interventions, the likelihood of economic weakening, military pressure, and limitations on regional influence will increase.

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## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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