

From isolation to integration

# Iran's balancing act pays off, reduces regional tensions

*The onset of the previous Iranian government's tenure coincided with unique circumstances affecting the country's foreign policy. On the one hand, negotiations to resuscitate the JCPOA were left inconclusive at the time, and on the other, the tightening sanctions on Iran necessitated extra effort to navigate and develop the country's foreign relations. In this regard, two significant events on two fronts — regional and international — warrant consideration. Regionally, the fierce conflicts between the Saudi Arabia-led Arab coalition forces and Yemen precipitated a unique dynamic in relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Arab nations, especially Saudi Arabia. Internationally, the outbreak of the Ukraine war and Iran's strategic ties with Russia bred pessimism among Western nations vis-à-vis Iran.*

In this situation, the late Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian assumed the helm of the country's foreign policy. Considering the aforementioned challenges, he endeavored to clear many of the existing hurdles with a judicious and pragmatic revolutionary approach and to smooth the path for expanding the nation's ties.

Naturally, Iran's adopted policies and the Foreign Ministry's approach partly emanated from the prevailing circumstances and the positive or negative outcomes of the penultimate government's policies in the international arena. The deployment of novel approaches also stems from the perspective of the late president Ebrahim Raisi, coupled with the management style and thoughts of Amir-Abdollahian as a decision-maker and enforcer of the country's foreign policy.

Before assessing these matters, it is apt to acknowledge that despite the arduous conditions impeding the advancement of policies envisaged by the Islamic Republic of Iran in regional and international arenas, we should not overlook the steadfast, calm, trust-building, yet firm character of the late

Amir-Abdollahian.

Amir-Abdollahian took the reins of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs amid the backdrop of the so-called "maximum pressure" campaign imposed by the United States and its European allies. However, through his tireless endeavors, he managed to break the deadlock that stalled the development of the country's ties with other nations. Among his salient achievements were:

## Promotion of good neighborliness policy

A key focus of the previous Iranian government was fostering amicable ties with neighboring countries. In this vein, despite tensions with Iran's northwestern and eastern neighbors, the country's diplomatic apparatus adeptly managed crises and prevented tension escalation with neighbors, ultimately enhancing communication levels.

## Balanced policy, eastward orientation

The Islamic Republic of Iran pursues peaceful relations with all countries worldwide, guided by its national interests and a balanced, fair policy befitting an in-



dependent nation. However, with the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA, the nuclear deal lost efficacy. Heeding the guidance of the Leader of Iran's Revolution that "not everywhere in the world is the West," the Raisi government adopted the so-called "Look to the East" policy, starting with China. The previous government firmly placed an emphasis on looking to the East as the cornerstone of its foreign policy in the international arena, adopting a pragmatic approach.

Iran's Leader elucidated, "In foreign policy, preference for the East over the West, preference for neighbors, and preference for nations and countries that share commonalities with us over others is among our priorities today." These statements by Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, outlining a