ملخص التقرير الإستراتيجي السنوي لعام 2022
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2022 saw significant shifts in the regional and global arenas, as well as in Iranian affairs, as highlighted by the International Institute for Iranian Studies (Rasanah) 2022 Annual Strategic Report through studying, analyzing and forecasting future developments in the coming year given the complexities on the global stage.

Saudi Policy Orientations in 2022 and Beyond

Saudi Arabia, as a regional power with influence over regional and international affairs, has engaged in exceptional activities that merited a mention in the report’s introduction. In 2022, Saudi Arabia achieved several positive development indicators and assumed effective and influential regional and international foreign policy positions, including:
- Successfully navigating through the testing time in Saudi-US relations which have witnessed a shift in position toward the US ally and inclining toward the multipolar order
- Saudi Arabia's independent position on the Russia-Ukraine war and at OPEC Plus
- The developments related to the Saudi positions on Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and Iran and efforts at mediation exerted by Saudi Arabia to resolve these crises
- The qualitative and unconventional initiatives adopted by Saudi Arabia such as the Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative
- Strengthening the standing of Saudi Arabia in the Arab and Islamic worlds amid a volatile geopolitical environment
- The activities related to internal transformation, enhancing national identity and diversifying economic resources

The Major Issues Highlighted in the Report Concerning the International Stage

Given the substantial transformations in relations between major world powers, with the outbreak of strategic competition and the return of the atmosphere of conflict between major world powers as a prelude to structural changes in the global order as well as the challenges faced by several countries, the report includes the following files:
- The Repercussions of the Russia-Ukraine War on International Security and the Global Order
- The European Dilemma and Patterns of Response to Mounting Challenges
- The Taiwan Question and the Intensification of Sino-US Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific Region
- The United States and Defending Its Standing in the Face of Global Challenges
- The Crises Gripping the Global Economy in Light of Disputes Between Major World Powers
- Global Military Developments and Non-Traditional Security Threats
- Crisis of Violent Groups and Islamist Movements

The Interactions Related to the Middle East

The Middle East, as one of the world’s major sub-regions, was not immune to the global order’s transformations in 2022. Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war and the support provided to Ukraine by Washington and other European capitals against Russia as well as the escalating US-Chinese dispute over Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific, paradigm shifts in the global order took place. This was in the context of the larger conflict over global leadership as well as the nature of the global order. These shifts create more opportunities and leeway for regional actors to exploit in order to maximize their regional and global standing in the new global equation. The following files are included:
• The US Orientations Toward the Middle East Amid Changing Regional and International Landscape
• Exploiting Shifts: The Dynamism of Turkish Foreign Policy in Several Regions
• Israel Enters a Vortex of Domestic Dilemmas and External Challenges

**Iranian Affairs**
The Iranian arena was filled with bitter events in the year 2022, whether at home or at the level of Iran's interactions with regional neighbors or its moves on the global stage. It has been one year since Ebrahim Raisi took office, and his government appears to have failed to deliver on its promises to the Iranian people as evidenced by the deteriorating economic conditions, violations of civil liberties, and a befuddled foreign policy. This resulted in a wave of massive protests in Iran throughout the year. The demonstrations served as a referendum on the government's poor performance in 2022. Among the topics discussed are:

**Fragile Stability: Iran’s Internal Situation Under the Raisi Government**
This file features an assessment of the performance of the Raisi government one year after taking office. The country's economic policies in 2022 are also reviewed, the security breaches it suffered and the infiltration of the Iranian home front is also examined in Iran's Security Establishment: Shortcomings and Official Responses to Security Breaches. Iran's ideological developments are analyzed in Shifts in Shiite Discourse while the country's new defense posture is explained in Deterrence and Partnership: Iran's Defense Policies and Its Cooperation with China and Russia.

**Fluctuating Influence: Iran’s Presence in the Arab Region in Light of Regional and International Developments**
The topics included are: Gulf-Iran Rapprochement in a Turbulent Region, The Dimensions of the Political Settlement and the Spheres of Iranian Clout in Yemen, Intra-Shiite Conflict in Iraq, Conflicts of Interest and Iranian Expansion in Syria, Hezbollah and the Challenges to Its Role in Lebanon.

**Conducive Environment: Iranian Moves in the International Arena Amid Rising Competition Between Major Powers**
It includes: US-Iran Relations: Between Cautious Diplomacy and Lack of Confidence, Russia-Iran Rapprochement in the Post Ukraine Crisis, BRICS After SCO: Chinese-Iranian Motives to Deepen Their Partnership and Cooperation, European Mediation and the Impasse in the Nuclear Talks With Iran, The Management of Rivalry: The Overlapping of Iranian-Turkish Interests in the Middle East, and The Impact of the Israel's Octopus Doctrine on the Image of the IRGC.
Saudi Policy

Rediscovering National Identity According to Saudi Vision 2030

The year 2022 is considered the year of rediscovering national identity as well as major political transformations on the map of Saudi Arabia’s new diplomacy. Saudi policy sought to expand the scope of its activities on the global stage rather than confining efforts to relations with the West, laying down a new concept of the state and restoring the country’s standing as a leader of the Arab and Islamic world and a chief global actor.

The Most Salient Developments

- Reevaluating relations with the US in a way that furthers Saudi national interests
- Pursuing neutrality in the Russia-Ukraine war
- Establishing balanced relations between global poles (Russia, China, Japan and India)
- Using foreign policy to serve the economy
- Signing a memorandum of understanding with the Hong Kong government
- Joining the Indian Ocean Coalition as an observer
- Hosting three summits (between China, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf, and Arab states). The signing of a comprehensive strategic agreement between China and Saudi Arabia. This is in addition to managing regional consensual efforts that entrenched longstanding stability in the strategically significant Middle East and enhanced the effective role of Middle Eastern countries in international affairs.
- Preserving oil market stability, particularly OPEC Plus resolutions
- Connecting the developments of the war in Yemen and Saudi Arabia’s oil supplies
- Establishing five regional firms to invest in Jordan, Bahrain, Sudan, Iraq and the Sultanate of Oman
- Expanding its foreign policy maneuvering room after decline in relations with the West
- Calling for reforming the UN Security Council to be more equitable and effective
- Joining the Global Ocean Alliance consisting of 32 nations
- Launching a national initiative for global supply chains
- Allocating $10 billion and unifying national and regional development funds to support global economic recovery
- Reviving mediation roles and developing diplomacy (the initiative of swapping prisoners of the Russia-Ukraine war)
- Collaborating to improve economic opportunities for the peoples and the world
- Supporting all the efforts aimed to reach a Yemeni-Yemeni political solution according to the three sources of reference (the Gulf Initiative, the National Dialogue and Resolution 2216)
- Seeking to reach a realistic resolution to the crises in Syria and Libya
- Forming a strategic partnership council with the UK
- Joining the dialogue partners list in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- Receiving world leaders and exchanging international visits to reach the best formula for peaceful coexistence
- Establishing a Saudi-Greek partnership council
- Attempting to join BRICS
- Reaching reconciliation with Turkey and starting talks with Iran
- Reaching a truce in Yemen and reinstating the Saudi ambassador to Lebanon
- The diplomacy of qualitative initiatives and environmental sustainability policies (the Green Middle East and Saudi Green Initiative)
- Enhancing the digital transformation and IA in Saudi Arabia
- Saudi Arabia’s momentum of initiatives and policies are expected to continue in 2023 in light of the vision and the Saudi leadership and its economic capabilities
PART ONE:

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA: HARBINGERS OF A MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER

The world is watching the strategic shifts which have been evolving in the international arena. These shifts reveal that the world order is passing through a difficult juncture. The emergence of a new world order seems imminent. Yet, the features, power hierarchy and leadership poles of the next world order are still ambiguous. In this part of Rasanah’s 2022 Annual Strategic Report, a host of strategic developments and shifts in the world order which have long and short-term impact are reviewed as follows:

• The Repercussions of the Russia-Ukraine War on International Security and The Global Order
• The European Impasse and Response Patterns to Address Rising Challenges
• The Taiwan Question and the Intensification of Sino-US Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific Region
• The United States and Defending Its Standing in the Face of Global Challenges
• The Crises Griping the Global Economy in Light of Disputes Between Major World Powers
• Global Military Developments and Non-Traditional Security Threats
• Violent Groups and Islamist Movements in Crisis
The Repercussions of the Russia-Ukraine War on International Security and the Global Order

Russia’s Motives for Invading Ukraine

- Security reasons behind the war
  - Preventing Ukraine from joining NATO
  - Protecting the Russian-speaking minority in eastern Ukraine
  - Changing the ruling elite in Kyiv

Geopolitical motives for the military operation
- Geographic expansion and annexing more historical lands
- Acknowledgment of regional hegemony as a step to restore Russia’s international standing

Russian Achievements and Losses

- Strengthening the Russian presence in eastern Ukraine
- Ukraine abandoning the idea of joining NATO
- Failing to change the Ukrainian political system
- Increasing NATO expansion on Russia’s immediate border
- Russian security guarantees and strengthening its defense capabilities

The Repercussions of the Conflict on International Security and the Global Order

- Strengthening manifestations of US hegemony
  - Draining Russia and impeding its geopolitical expansion
  - The decline of EU competition with the US and repairing transatlantic relations
  - Chinese reluctance to impose regional control
  - Deepening Russo-Chinese cooperation versus US-European cooperation

The economic consequences
- The failure of economic sanctions to prevent war
- Exacerbation of global economic crises

Increasing geopolitical competition in sub-regions

Exacerbation of security and military risks

Intellectual and ideological implications

The Outcomes and the Future of the Russian-Western Conflict

- Ukraine possesses the capabilities and has the international support enabling it to withstand Russian offensives
- Russia will not achieve a lightning victory
- Russia will find bigger resistance from the West
- The war on Ukraine is considered crucial for Russian ambitions
- Russia will be more vulnerable to political instability, with major scenarios emerging:
  - Global and nuclear war scenario
  - Settlement scenario
  - Scenario of a long-term war (more likely)
  - Scenario of no war, no peace
The European Impasse and Patterns of Response to Address Rising Challenges

- **The Russian War and the Return to the Cold War**
  - 01 The European economic war with Moscow is still the most preferred European policy option
  - 02 The possibility of seeing a nuclear face-off between Russia and European nuclear powers increases international tensions
  - 03 The Eurasian powers prioritize security and military cooperation—and Iran and Russia are a case in point
  - 04 China seems more cautious about developing military cooperation with Moscow and Tehran
  - 05 Expanding the scope of security cooperation between Iran and Russia

- **The European-US Debate**
  - 01 The geopolitical factor of the Russia-Ukraine war is instrumentalized by the European elites to draw attention to the economic war between Europe and the Sino-Russian axis
  - 02 In Washington, the debate primarily focuses on the Russia-Ukraine war, its cost and the danger posed by military escalation
  - 03 The US strategy's approach toward Ukraine is passive when it comes to the balance of power

- **The European Dilemma**
  - 01 Difficult options before Europe: supporting peace, diplomatic mediation or a Ukrainian military victory
  - 02 Some Eastern European countries desire for Russia's defeat
  - 03 France believes that Ukraine should balance military power in anticipation of starting diplomatic talks
  - 04 Economic objectives divide Washington and Brussels on defense and energy sectors

- **The Future of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: The Challenges Ahead of Europe**
  - 01 Negative impacts in Europe for the high cost of imported gas and the difficulty of suspending oil imports from Russia
  - 02 European nations are divided on the issue of imposing sanctions on Russia
  - 03 The difficulty to reach a diplomatic solution and change the Western strategy, with two scenarios on the cards:
    - The continuation of frontline confrontations in eastern Ukraine and the level of sanctions imposed by Brussels (a more likely scenario)
    - A Ukrainian military victory or a successful Russian counteroffensive

Summary of Annual Strategic Report 2022
The Taiwan Question and the Intensification of Sino-US Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific Region

- Intensification of Sino-US Conflict in the Indo-Pacific Region
  
  01 The US escalation against China in 2022 took on a military nature
  
  02 China escalated militarily in response to the US military escalation
  
  03 The US-Chinese escalation in the Indo-Pacific aims to dominate the global economy and form a powerful global alliance

- Taiwan – a Flash Point in the US Escalation Against China
  
  01 The US political and military escalation
  
  02 The Chinese response to the military, political and economic challenges brought on by the Taiwanese dispute

- Motives for Sino-US Escalation Over Taiwan
  
  01 US Motives
    - The relative decline of US hegemony in the world order
    - China’s swift moves to reduce the power gap with the US
    - China’s position on the Russian invasion of Ukraine
    - The shift in Europe’s position on China
    - The 2022 NATO Strategic Concept
  
  02 China’s Motives
    - Fearing losing Taiwan; an important card for the global economy
    - Beijing’s concern over the growing strength of Taipei’s democratic model
    - Fear of losing control of the Indo-Pacific region
    - Taipei’s significance for Beijing in the battle with Washington over global leadership

The Future of Sino-US Escalation Over Taiwan

- The most prominent outcomes
  
  - The conflict led to the reemergence of polarization among the great powers. The positions of Russia and China heighten the challenges to the current world order
  
  - The dispute shifting from competition to military escalation in the South China Sea
  
  - Deepening outstanding international crises such as the energy crisis, the global recession and supply chains
  
  - China emerging as an international pole of global weight and standing
  
  - The US policy of implication remains unsuccessful since it has put Europe, a Washington ally, in a strategic morass, with the Russians using gas against the continent

- Scenarios for 2023
  
  - War
  
  - Calculated escalation
    - Ranging between escalation, easing and containment of tensions
The United States and Defending Its Standing in the Face of Global Challenges

The Declining Status of the United States Amid the Challenges Posed by Rising Powers in the New World Order

01. The US emerged victorious and dominant on the international stage after the Cold War
02. The United States’ draft Defense Planning Guidance document of 1992 proposed a set of military, economic and political steps designed to maintain Washington’s power.
03. The 21st century saw the massive economic rise of China and India
04. Populist and isolationist rhetoric by the Trump administration escalated the international conflict
05. The US approach of polarization when shaping policies on the economy, climate change, defense, agriculture and foreign affairs impacted its geopolitical positioning and role in the international arena.

Strategic Competition and US Arrangements to Confront Revisionist Powers

01. After the 2008 financial crisis, China started defying US hegemony
02. The Obama administration attempted to stop China’s rise through partnership and strengthening the US diplomatic and military presence in East Asia
03. Ratification of the Strategic Competition Act of 2021
04. The US took measures on the ground to implement security strategy under Biden by:
- Supporting Ukraine militarily
- Laying out security strategy to counter Chinese threats
- Enhancing and amending Washington’s partnerships

Challenges and the Future of US Hegemony

01. Coronavirus pandemic placed massive pressures on the global order and economy— including the United States
02. US-Chinese competition escalated
03. China rushed to promote one-party model
04. US soft power and moral standing declined, so it is not expected that Washington will restore its hegemony
05. Tensions between the US and China will allow midlevel powers to restore balance to global order
06. The US is likely to face foreign policy hindrances, including:
- EU ambitions to achieve strategic independence
- China displaying soft power as well as showcasing geopolitical and economic threats
- Continued domestic polarization ahead of 2024 presidential election
- Internal economic challenges such as price hikes, unemployment and rising debt rates
- Russian geopolitical threats in Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia
The Crises Griping the Global Economy in Light of Disputes Between Major World Powers

The Impact of Food Price Hikes on Global Food Security

01 Reasons for food shortage
- Coronavirus pandemic
- Russia-Ukraine war
- Climate change and drought

02 Consequences of global food insecurity
- Declining food security indicators worldwide
- Rise in hunger rates worldwide

03 Future of the food insecurity crisis
- Recent drought wave has impacted grain production by major producers such as China
- Increasing protectionism will be source of concern in the future
- Drought and Russia-Ukraine war remain major food security threats

Energy Crisis and Future Scenarios

01 Reasons behind the crisis
- A crisis dating back to 2014/2015 amid the decline in energy prices to record lows
- Russia-Ukraine war

02 Consequences of energy price rises
- Revenues and gains for energy producers
- Harm caused to energy consumers

03 Future energy scenarios will witness dramatic changes

Status and Direction of the Global Economy

01 Transformation of the global economic environment
- Russia-Ukraine war and its impacts exacerbating economic crises
- Accumulated debts and their implications for political and social stability
- Climate change and its implications for the deepening economic crises

The Global Economy’s Direction in Light of Mounting Crises

- If the Russia-Ukraine war continues, the global economy will remain vulnerable to a sharp recession and shocks
- Recovery of global economy depends on the easing of geopolitical tensions, restoring supply chain efficiency and lifting economic and financial sanctions against Russia
- Outlook of Asian economies such as China, India and Japan as well as the Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia, is stable since the latter would benefit from energy price hikes
Global Military Developments and Non-Traditional Security Threats

- **Escalation Ladder to Space**
  01 Outer space is considered among the spheres of strategic competition among major world powers
  02 Arming space sparks massive dangers in light of sharp polarization

- **Increase in Cyberspace Disruptions**
  01 Countries continue to allocate resources as a priority to protect cyberspace
  02 Cyberspace is not protected by international treaties and agreements
  03 Iran’s cyberspace force ranks tenth in the world

- **Drone Swarms as Alternatives to Conventional Arms**
  01 Russia has used Iranian drones in the war in Ukraine
  02 Drones are expected to be more sophisticated and lethal on the battlefield

- **Induction of Hypersonic Arms**
  01 Russia and China plan to integrate hypersonic planes into their military arsenal and doctrine
  02 The US has embarked on developing its weapons systems to cope with these dangers

- **Climate Change and Migration Endangering Security and Stability**
  01 The years 2021 and 2022 carried cautionary messages that the global ecosystem is on the verge of collapsing
  02 The political polarization obstructs the mission of policymakers to integrate climate change plans into their policies

- **The Engagement of Foreign Fighters and Private Military Companies in Conflicts and Wars**
  01 There are security and political dangers related to the participation of foreign fighters
  02 The year 2022 was the year of Russian private military firms (Russia’s Wagner Group)
  03 Iran is among the biggest countries in terms of deploying transboundary proxy militias

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**Unconventional Threats to Global Security and Stability**

- **01** Russian invasion of Ukraine proves that mercenaries play an active role in international conflicts
- **02** The UN has to urgently develop initiatives to address the flaws resulting from using destructive technologies
- **03** It is expected that the world will see further complexity in unconventional security issues in 2023
- **04** Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology is deemed a notable breakthrough for warfare operations and has been intensively used by armies
Violent Groups and Islamist Movements in Crisis

The Jihadist Groups and Their Successive Setbacks

01 The future of al-Qaeda after the killing of Zawahiri
   - A leadership vacuum after the killing of Zawahiri
   - The disagreement between al-Qaeda and the Taliban
   - Al-Qaeda’s future in Afghanistan

02 The crisis of ISIS (Daesh)
   - Face-off with the Taliban in Afghanistan
   - The limbo in Syria and Iraq
   - Fading momentum in Africa
   - Maintaining watertight coordination with the Houthis, where the two sides mutually benefit each other, particularly regarding operations in the southern provinces

The Muslim Brotherhood: A Neck-breaking Dispute Among Divergent Wings and a Diminishing Source of Guidance

01 Prevalence of a rift and fragmentation within the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt
02 Yusuf al-Qaradwi’s death and its impact on the Islamists’ sources of guidance
03 Backlash among Islamists in the Arab world over the remarks of Moroccan scholar Ahmad al-Raissouni on jihad in Algeria and annexing Mauritania to Morocco

Shifts in Shiite Islamism

01 Bypassing the marjaya: Shiite Islamist movements in crisis in Iraq
02 The supreme marjaya and the future of the dispute over who leads Shites

Future of Violent Groups and Islamist Movements

01 Continuation of fragmentation and rifts among political Islam parties and movements due to:
   - Lack of an institutional dimension
   - Prevalence of unquestioning heeding and obedience, thereby deepening despotism
   - Giving precedence to trusted cadres over efficient ones
02 The weakening of Taliban-al-Qaeda ties after the killing of Zawahiri
03 Continuation of attacks by Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) against the Taliban, Afghans without gaining more ground
04 Continuation of war of attrition between Taliban and ISIS into next year
05 ISIS decline in Syria, Iraq and Africa and its inability to gain more ground while waging terrorist attacks against civilians and key institutions
06 Further division and fragmentation among Islamist parties and movements and a decline in the momentum of violent groups like ISIS

Summary of Annual Strategic Report 2022
PART TWO:

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REGIONAL REARRANGEMENTS IN AN UNSTABLE REGION

The recent international shifts affect the policies of key regional and international actors on major issues of the Middle East, leading to strategic and policy changes and rearrangements in the region. These changes affect not only the Middle East but the whole world given the fact that international relations are highly intertwined and complex. Further, key regional and international powers have more room to maneuver in the Middle East than any other region and are able to further enhance their strength in the new international order. This part discusses the following:

• The US Orientations Toward the Middle East Amid Changing Regional and International Landscape
• Exploiting Shifts: The Dynamism of Turkish Foreign Policy in Several Regions
• Israel Enters a Vortex of Domestic Dilemmas and External Challenges
The US Orientations Toward the Middle East Amid Changing Regional and International Landscape

Despite the decline of the Middle East on the agenda of priorities of US President Joe Biden, the region has maintained a good position given that it is a vital strategic sphere for Washington to defend its traditional vital interests. Among the reasons that have shaped the current US position toward the region are:

- US President Joe Biden’s commitment to his initial position to lower US interest in the Middle East
- Gulf opposition to the US rush to resurrect the nuclear deal
- The US overlooking the Palestinian cause while reiterating support for Israel’s security
- Reviewing relations with Turkey and launching a new strategic mechanism for cooperation
- Avoiding any direct intervention in regional issues, which led to a decline in the US role compared to the past
- The Gulf states refused to bow to US pressures to raise their oil exports
- Biden’s attempt to reconsider US policies and reassure allies, visiting Saudi Arabia and attending an Arab summit
- The regional countries’ reevaluation of their relations with the US
- Giving more room for maneuvering to some regional powers after the outbreak of the US, Western dispute with the Russia-China axis
- Turkey rejected the US and Western desire to expand NATO by including Finland and Sweden
- Confronting Iran and its proxy actors and considering them a direct threat and preventing it from possessing nuclear weapons
- Falling to reach a breakthrough in expanding the Abraham Accords
- The differences between the US and regional powers over the latter’s neutrality in the Russia-Ukraine war
- These countries have not complied with the US sanctions on Russia
- Ending the maritime dispute between Lebanon and Israel
- It is expected that the US will reassess its relations with the Middle East in light of the visit of China’s president to Saudi Arabia, accordingly the competition between the great powers in the region will increase
Exploiting Shifts: The Dynamism of Turkish Foreign Policy in Several Regions

Turkish foreign policy quarters have seen intensified movements to pull out all the stops to strengthen Turkish foreign relations in multiple geographical spheres throughout 2022.

Major Foreign Policy Moves

- Commencing military operations in northern Syria and Iraq and targeting the PKK
- Receiving $10 billion in Turkish treasury bonds from Saudi Arabia
- Brokering a Russia-Ukraine deal allowing Kyiv to export grain worldwide
- Ending tensions with major Arab and Gulf powers
- Reiterating the end of tensions between Saudi Arabia and Turkey by Saudi Crown Prince and Turkish president
- Turkey's acting as a neutral mediator in the Russia-Ukraine war
- Signing 13 bilateral cooperation agreements with the UAE
- Handing over 20 Bayraktar TB2 drones to the UAE
- Seeking to deepen economic, strategic and defense ties with the Central Asian nations
- Turkey exploited the current international conditions to reposition itself and enhance its status in the region and the world
Israel Enters a Vortex of Domestic Dilemmas and External Challenges

Throughout 2022, Israel witnessed remarkable developments which are expected to have tangible repercussions on its political reality in the coming period. Foremost among these developments are:

- Failure to form a stable government accepted by the majority of political blocs
- Dissolving the Knesset and calling for early elections
- Forming right-wing cabinet led by Benjamin Netanyahu who won Knesset majority
- Arabs adhering to two-state solution and reiterating Palestinian cause's centrality
- Receding chances of expanding the Abraham Accords
- Failure to achieve progress on reaching a peaceful settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians
- Increase in Palestinian resistance attacks in the West Bank
- Decline in confidence in state institutions by major segments of Israeli society
- Mounting tensions with Iran as it edges closer to nuclear threshold

The challenges facing the Israeli government are expected to continue due to the sharp internal divisions and political polarization.
The first year of the Raisi government witnessed profound developments which impacted Iran’s internal situation at various levels; the political, economic, social, security, and ideological. These developments also impacted Iran’s foreign policy with its neighbors and its maneuvers in the international arena. Part Three of Rasanah’s 2022 Annual Strategic Report discusses the most prominent developments and shifts Iran witnessed at home and abroad during the first year of Raisi’s government through three main headings as follows:

• Fragile Stability: Iran’s Internal Situation Under the Raisi Government
• Fluctuating Influence: Iran’s Presence in the Arab Region in Light of Regional and International Developments
• Conducive Environment: Iranian Moves in the International Arena Amid Rising Competition Between Major Powers
Assessing the Performance of the Raisi Government One Year After Taking Office

- Popular discontent reflects the government's failure to fulfill its promises
- In spite of government efforts to fulfill Raisi's campaign promises and the supreme leader's support, the Iranian public did not feel any improvement
- Human rights organizations reported on the increase in executions to intimidate citizens and political activists in a brutal attempt to halt the escalation of the protests
- The Raisi Government resorts to crackdowns in light of poor performance
- Raisi is ready to be a scapegoat to implement all the policies of the Supreme Leader's Office, and externally he is expected to walk a tightrope between the major powers
- The Raisi Government's modest foreign policy dividends—though the general framework of the Raisi government's foreign policy reflected special attention to improving Iran's relations with neighboring countries
A Troubled Economy: Effectiveness of Raisi’s Policies to Resolve the Country’s Economic Problems

Sources: World Bank- International Monetary Fund (IMF) – October 2022 - The Economist (EIU)- Worldometers- Iran Statistical Center.
Iran’s Security Establishment: Shortcomings and Official Responses to Security Breaches

- **Trajectory of Iranian Security Breaches in 2022**
  - Iran faced dangerous security breaches which have exposed how flawed this security establishment is.
  - The breaches involved senior IRGC leaders, the Ministry of Intelligence and other apparatuses concerned with security activities.

- **Iranian responses to Security Breaches**
  - Denial and contradiction have been the hallmark of the Iranian government’s response to the breaches targeting the security establishment.
  - Promoting the idea that there is an outside enemy that targets the nuclear program—a pretext for the failure to counter security breaches.

- **Fragility of Iran’s Security System**
  - Conflicting and overlapping duties of security services which rob them of effectiveness.
  - Competition between security organizations and giving precedence to the IRGC, which weakens other apparatuses.
  - Choosing cadres based on criteria such as religious and ideological affiliations, not based on merit and capacity, which weakens the entire security apparatus.
Shifts in Shiite Discourse

The Hijab Crisis in Iran
- The “reformists” and hawzas called for the officials responsible for Mahasa Amini’s death to be held accountable
- Iran’s ruling religious elites believe that failure to comply with the mandatory hijab law is a crime

The Repercussions of Haeri’s Resignation
- Iran chose to undermine Sadr doctrinally through Haeri
- Sadr attacks Haeri and denounces the politicization of the marjaya
- Sadr’s crisis of emulation and allying with Najaf

The Future of the Intra-Shiite Dispute
- The ruling establishment will continue to take a more extreme line on the issue of the hijab in spite of widespread public objection
- Uncertainty over the future of Sadrist marjaya emulation
Deterrence and Partnership: Iran’s Defense Policies and Its Cooperation With China and Russia

**Increased Russia-Iran Cooperation**
- The Syrian and Ukrainian crises increased rapprochement
- Moscow’s prominent role in signing the JCPOA
- Supporting Russia in the Russia-Ukraine war and the delivery of drones and ballistic missiles
- Signing a memorandum of understanding for cooperation and barter agreements

**The Basis of the Iran-China Partnership**
- Unconditional and unlimited support for Iran’s nuclear program
- Signing a memorandum of understanding for the development of projects spanning over 25 years
- China’s support for establishing a restricted intranet network in Iran to confront the protests and opponents

**Future of Iran’s Defense Cooperation With China and Russia**
- Using the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a platform for rapprochement
- Russian and China will resort to balance their interests between Iran and the regional countries
- The continuation of Iranian-Russian military cooperation
Social Developments in Iran in 2022

- The Pandemic caused 60,000 first graders to skip school in 2021-2022
- Vulnerabilities of employment
- Poverty and social injustice

- The reoccurrence of the protests
- The systematic torture of prisoners
- Criminal activities and drug abuse

- Gender employment gap
- Discrimination against women
- Women and children welfare challenges

Summary of Annual Strategic Report 2022
Gulf-Iran: Rapprochement in a Turbulent Region

Potential Scenarios
- Better relations
- Escalation of tensions
- Cautious calm

The most likely scenario: Iran will use its proxies, like the Houthis, to place pressure

Obstacles
- The structure of the Iranian political system and the collision of perspectives
- A crisis of confidence
- Regional and international conditions
- Iran’s internal situation

Positive Indicators
- The Iranian president’s foreign tour, starting with the Gulf (Oman and Qatar)
- The return of Gulf ambassadors to Tehran (UAE and Kuwait)
- The momentum of Saudi-Iran dialogue
- The crisis facing Iran-backed militias
The Dimensions of the Political Settlement and the Spheres of Iranian Clout in Yemen

The Deadlock of Peace in Yemen Between Houthi Belligerence and Iran’s Regional Agenda

- The military dimension influenced by the IRGC and the Lebanese Hezbollah
- The political dimension regarding the Houthis’ conditions for extending the truce through Iranian dictates

The Efforts of the Arab Coalition to Revive International Focus on Reaching a Political Settlement

- Global diplomatic momentum for the Coalition amid international preoccupation with the Russia-Ukraine war
- The Jeddah Security and Development Summit worked to make the Yemeni crisis a priority for the US administration

The Future of the Yemeni Crisis in 2023

- Reaching a new fragile truce with Yemen experiencing the “no peace and no war” stage again
- The Presidential Leadership Council takes the lead militarily
- The Militia’s obstruction of the political settlement by targeting energy resources
Jihad Council

Office of Sayyed Abdulmalik al-Houthi
Leader of Qur'anic Procession

Central Council
1. Judicial Council
2. Government Works Authority
3. Executive Council
4. Political Council
5. Governorate Affairs Council
6. Tribal Cohesion Council

Jihad Office
Secretary General Abu Mohammed
Operations official
(Under Construction)

Military Regions Official
Mohammad Abdalkarim al-Ghammari

Military Intelligence Authority - Abdulmalik al-Hakim

Jihad Preparation Official
Unknown

Special Forces
Abu Fatima

Deputy Jihad Assistant
(Lebanese Hezbollah) Abu Zainab

Jihad Assistant (IRGC QF)
(Under Construction)

Security official
Preventative security
Ahsan al-Humran b. late 1970

IRGC-QF/ Hezbollah Advisors
1. Security and Intelligence Service
Abdul Hakim al-Khaiwani and deputy Qader al-Shami
2. Ministry of Interior

Military and paramilitary forces
Governance
Strategic assets directly controlled by Abdulmalik
Intelligence services
Foreign advisors


Information Operations
Mohammed Abdalsalam
Al Masirah
TV, radio and online network
Saba News Agency - Houthi social media center - Nasser al-Din Amer

Summary of Annual Strategic Report 2022
The Ramifications of the Intra-Shiite Conflict on Iran’s Influence
- Preferring a consensual figure to head the government
- Appointing a well-connected ambassador with Shiite alliances
- Mediating between Shiite alliances
- Placing pressure on the Sadrist Movement by threatening to instigate chaos

The Intra-Shiite Conflict and the Future of Iran’s Influence in 2023
- The end of the conflict: If the Coordination Framework exclusively dominates Iraq’s political scene with Sadr adhering to his withdrawal from politics
- A deadlock in the conflict: If the Sudani government adopts balanced policies
- Reigniting the conflict: If the Sudani government adopts an exclusionary policy toward other currents

Causes of the Intra-Shiite Conflict
- The largest bloc
- The nature of the government: consensual or majority
- The form of the Iraqi state: independent or pursuing special interests
- The dissolution of the Parliament and early elections

The Features of the Intra-Shiite Conflict
- Central and non-marginal conflict
- Escalating and extended conflict
- The threat of uncontrolled proliferation of weapons

Intra-Shiite Conflict in Iraq
Conflicts of Interest and Iranian Expansion in SYRIA

- Iran’s Policy Toward Syria in the Context of the Russia-Ukraine War
  - Iran’s expansion post Russia vacating several sites
  - Attempts to entice the Syrian government
  - Forging rapprochement between Astana’s partners
  - Diplomatic moves to promote regional rapprochement with Syria

- Military Escalation in Syria and Iranian and Israeli Calculations
  - Causes and motives for escalation
  - Iran’s response to escalation
  - Repercussions of the Russia-Ukraine war on Moscow’s understanding with Tel Aviv

- The Potential Trends in 2023
  - Iran’s role will continue to expand in light of the current international developments, (the most likely scenario)
  - To remain unchanged
«Hezbollah» and the Challenges to Its Role in Lebanon

- The Lebanese Parliamentary Elections and the Loss of Hezbollah’s Majority
  - The implications of the October 2019 uprising
  - Higher representation quotas for anti-Hezbollah elements
  - The absence of an electoral majority destabilizes the entire Lebanese

- Lebanese Maritime Border Negotiations and Hezbollah’s Position
  - Escalation, threats and disavowal before making a volte-face by showing flexibility
  - Adherence to the agreement due to the economic significance
  - New political reality within the framework of unannounced normalization

- Hezbollah and the Constitutional Allocations’ Dilemma
  - The flotation of Najib Mikati’s government
  - The presidency and the absence of consensus among political parties

- Potential Trends for 2023
  - The return of Netanyahu as prime minister of Israel jeopardizes the maritime demarcation
  - Tactical decline in Iran’s influence and its proxy, Hezbollah in Lebanon
**US-Iran Relations: Between Cautious Diplomacy and Lack of Confidence**

### The Approach to Diplomacy and the Dilemma of Resolving Thorny Issues
- An Iranian desire to reach a good deal that ensures as much of its interests as possible
- US insistence on preventing Iran from retaining its nuclear gains outside the scope of the nuclear agreement

### Confrontational Approach Between US Sanctions and Iranian Moves to Alleviate Their Impact
- Intensifying US sanctions
- Exerting pressure via the IAEA
- Putting pressure on the Iranian government through supporting the protests
- Placing more sanctions on Iranian oil exports and strategic commodities

### The Impact of Disagreements on Their Regional and International Policies

#### US orientations
- Regional deterrence and cooperation with allies to put pressure on Iran
- Military cooperation with Israel
- Creating a transatlantic consensus against Iran
- Putting pressure on Iran via the IAEA

#### Iranian orientations
- Directing proxy militias to target US positions in Iraq
- Threatening maritime navigation
- Defense cooperation with Russia
- Activating partnership with China

### The Future of Iran-US Relations: Interactions and Confrontation
- Diplomacy may be the most viable option for the two sides
- Considering negotiations and diplomacy the preferred option for the US while preventing Iran from surpassing the nuclear threshold until 2031. For Iran, it is the best way to overcome its financial crisis which has fueled the ongoing waves of protests
- Ongoing deep-rooted differences between the two sides on several issues, making the negotiations tougher
- Reaching a nuclear deal in the end, if any, will not end the hostility between the two nations given the lack of trust, which prevents any comprehensive resolution to the historical and chronic differences
## US Sanctions on Iran and Its Regional Arms in 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 March</td>
<td>The designation of two Hezbollah financiers Ali Saade and Ibrahim Taher for their ties with Hezbollah’s business network in West Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 March</td>
<td>Sanctions on five entities and individuals in Russia and South Korea and one entity in the People’s Republic of China for proliferation activities in collaboration with Iran, North Korea, and Syria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 March</td>
<td>Designation of five Iranian citizens and entities for their involvement in Iran’s ballistic missile-related activities for procuring equipment used to produce ballistic missile propellants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 April</td>
<td>The designation of individuals for their involvement in Iran’s ballistic missile-related activities following Iran’s recent missile attack on Erbil, Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 May</td>
<td>Sanctions on Hezbollah’s main businessmen, financial facilitators, companies and their associates in Lebanon and Iraq for funding Hezbollah’s terrorists acts and efforts to destabilize Lebanon and the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 May</td>
<td>Sanctions on Iran’s international oil smuggling and money laundering networks run by officials of the IRGC and Hezbollah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 June</td>
<td>Sanctions on three individuals associated with the Quds Force and 16 individuals, entities and groups affiliated with a variety of regional terrorist organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 June</td>
<td>The Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed the Stop Iranian Drones Act. Based on the provisions of the act, the United States will prevent Iran and any terrorist aligned with Iran from being able to acquire drones, including commercial parts that can be used in attacks against US personnel and partner nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 June</td>
<td>The US State Department offered a reward of up to $15 million for information related to the IRGC’s financial network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 June</td>
<td>The designation of Fanavaran Petrochemical, Kharg Petrochemical and Marun Petrochemical, including several front companies operating in China, the UAE and Iran for their involvement in supporting Iranian companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 July</td>
<td>The designation of 15 individuals and entities that engaged in illicit sales and shipment of Iranian petroleum and petrochemical products. These entities are located in Iran, Vietnam, Singapore, the UAE and Hong Kong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 August</td>
<td>The US State Department designated six entities that engaged in illicit sales of Iranian petroleum, petroleum products and petrochemical products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 August</td>
<td>The US Commerce Department accused Far East Cable, China’s largest wire and cable manufacturer, of violating US export controls related to the shipment of telecommunications to Iran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 August</td>
<td>The US Department of Justice accused a member of the IRGC for planning the assassination of former US National Security Advisor John Bolton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Sept</td>
<td>The designation of a person involved in the shipment of Iranian drones to Russia for its war against Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sept</td>
<td>Sanctions on Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and National Security for an attack launched on the Albanian government’s computer systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sept</td>
<td>Sanctions on four Iranian companies and Rehmatollah Heidari for illicit transactions with Russia and the designation of Paravar Pars Company, Design and Manufacturing of Aircraft Engines (DAMA), and Beharestan Kish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sept</td>
<td>Sanctions on 10 individuals and two entities affiliated with the IRGC for their roles in conducting malicious cyberattacks on US institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Sept</td>
<td>Sanctions on Boeing 747s owned by Iranian airline companies for transporting goods including electronic items to Russia in apparent violation of stringent US export controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Sept</td>
<td>The Department of State designated two entities based in the People’s Republic of China for their involvement in circumventing sanctions imposed on Iran’s petrochemical trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Oct</td>
<td>Sanctions against Iran’s Minister of Interior Ahmad Wahidi and Minister of Communications Eisa Zarepour, and five senior officials of Iran’s security apparatus for cracking down on peaceful protesters and blocking internet access in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Oct</td>
<td>Sanctions on 14 Iranian officials and three entities in Iran, and the US Treasury Department warned non-US persons and foreign companies of cooperating with these individuals or entities because they would also be exposed to third-party sanctions for violating US sanctions. These sanctions are part of the US Treasury Department’s previous sanctions following the Iranian protests in September 2022.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Nov</td>
<td>The US Treasury Department sanctioned a network of front and shell companies established to facilitate the illegal export of Iranian oil around the world. The network consists of six individuals, 17 entities, and is blocking 11 vessels because they helped in evading the sanctions and provided support to Hezbollah and the Quds Force of the IRGC by facilitating the sale of oil for hundreds of millions of dollars for the benefit of these two organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Nov</td>
<td>The designation of the IRGC Aerospace Force, Quds Aviation Industries, which produces Mohajer-6 drones, and Shahed Aviation Industries Research Center, which facilitates Iran’s drone supplies to Russia used by Russian forces to attack Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Nov</td>
<td>Sanctions on six senior employees of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting because this media corporation is not objective and is a tool in the Iranian government’s mass suppression and censorship campaign against its own people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Nov</td>
<td>The US Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Gulf Petrochemical Industry Commercial Co. (PGPCO) and Trilliance Petrochemical Co. Ltd. (Trilliance), as well as the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and its marketing arm, Natiran Intertrade Company Ltd. (NICO). These sanctions are over purchasing and facilitating the sale of Iranian petroleum and petrochemical products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Nov</td>
<td>The US Department of the Treasury designated Governor of Sanandaj Hassan Asgari, Commander of the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) in Sanandaj Ali Reza Moradi, Commander of Hamzeh Seyed al-Shohada base of the IRGC Ground Force Mohammad Taghi Osanloo following their repression of protesters in Iran’s Kurdish areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Dec</td>
<td>The Department of the Treasury took action against two individuals and two companies based in Lebanon for providing financial services and facilitating weapons procurement for Hezbollah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Dec</td>
<td>The US Department of the Treasury sanctioned an international smuggling and money laundering network led by businessman Siti Amin, over facilitating money laundering and oil smuggling to the IRGC Quds Force and Lebanon’s Hezbollah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Dec</td>
<td>Sanctions on three Russian entities connected to Moscow’s growing military relationship with Tehran — including the transfer of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Dec</td>
<td>Sanctions on five Iranian officials and one entity connected to serious human rights abuses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Russia-Iran Rapprochement in the Post Ukraine Crisis

**The Russia-Iran Partnership Is Expanding**
- Expansion of the political partnership in 2022
- Russia’s continuous support of balanced talks between Iran and the Gulf
- Iran’s withdrawal from two cites in Syria on Russia’s request
- Joint arrangements in the Caucasus to prevent the outbreak of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan

**Enhancing Military Cooperation**
- The expected strategic cooperation involves military and space cooperation
- Iran’s shipment of drones and ballistic missiles to Russia
- US concerns over Moscow’s advice to Tehran on best practices to manage and suppress the protests

**Enhancing Economic Cooperation**
- Russian-Iranian agreement to set up a free trade zone to enhance economic ties with the EAEU
- Russian support for Iran’s permanent membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- Signing a deal in the energy sector following Putin’s visit to Tehran

**The Future of Iran-Russia Relations Amid Their Crisis With the West**
- Greater strategic cooperation between the two countries
- Continuing to support the creation of a multipolar world order
- The possibility of providing Iran with sophisticated military capabilities and technical support in return for its participation in the Russia-Ukraine war

Summary of Annual Strategic Report 2022
BRICS After SCO: Iranian-Chinese Motives to Deepen Their Partnership and Cooperation

Iran and China on the Path of Cooperation

- China enabled Iran to achieve full membership of the SCO
- Iran seeks to secure the backing of China as influential ally after the signing of the 25-year Cooperation Agreement

Motives for deepening the partnership between Iran and China in light of Iran’s application to join BRICS

- Iran has 4 motives for joining BRICS to strengthen its partnership with China
- China also has 4 motives for Iran joining BRICS

The Geopolitical Importance of BRICS in the Context of Iran-China Relations

- Iran has employed the political-economic dimension in the Middle East
- China targeted Central Asia by taking advantage of Iran’s location

Challenges Facing Iran to Join BRICS

- The influence of China’s foreign policy factor
- Iran’s accession to BRICS in light of Gulf-Sino relations

The Future Cooperation in 2023

- Iran’s ambition to join BRICS will increase
- Iran’s accession to BRICS is expected to enhance its influence

- Iran’s growing doubts about China, against the backdrop of China concluding a strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia and boosting relations with Gulf and Arab states
The Potential Scenario Between Europe and Iran

The Role and Dimensions of European Mediation
- Mediation had a positive impact before the Ukrainian crisis
- Mediation became complicated after the US withdrawal from the agreement
- The escalation between the United States and Iran undermined European diplomacy

European Mediation and the Impasse in the Nuclear Talks With Iran

Challenges Facing European Mediation Efforts
- Europe’s economic impotence
- Iran’s refusal to adopt financial transparency and intellectual protection
- Tehran’s ideological opposition to Washington
- Two challenges due to the Iranian uprising and Iran’s delivery of drones and missiles to Russia

The escalation of tensions will likely impact the nuclear talks
- The deterioration of Iran-Europe relations due to Iran’s participation in the Russia-Ukraine war
- Economic collaboration cannot contribute to further reproachment with Tehran in light of ongoing sanctions and mutual distrust

Summary of Annual Strategic Report 2022
The Management of Rivalry: The Intertwining of Iranian-Turkish Interests in the Middle East

Iranian and Turkish Positions on the Russia-Ukraine War
- Iran aligned itself with Russia and Turkey stood neutral
- Iran provided Russia with drones after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war and the establishment of Turkish-Ukrainian military relations

Confrontation Between Iran and Turkey
- Turkey launched military operations
- Iran deployed Iraq’s PMF—supported by the missile arsenal of the IRGC and Iranian army

Iranian Intelligence Operations in Turkey
- Iran mainly chose Turkey to carry out kidnappings and assassinations of Israelis
- These operations did not cause a diplomatic crisis between the two countries—given their common interest

Normalization of Turkish Relations With Syria
- The Turkish position on Assad remaining in power in 2022 has changed
- Turkey has two trajectories in Syria: military in the north and political normalization with the Assad regime

Trends of Iran-Turkey Relations in 2023
- In case of Turkish-Syrian understanding, the Shiite militias will stop striking Turkish military bases
- If Ankara favors a military operation, the militias will probably relaunch missiles and drone attacks against the Turkish army
Iran’s Policy Toward the Emerging Challenges in Afghanistan and Its Asian Neighbors

Forecasting Iran’s Relations With Neighboring Countries in 2023:

- Prioritizing negotiations with the West to lift the sanctions
- Maintaining dialogue

Implications of Raisi’s Policy on Relations With Neighboring Countries

- Developed relations with Pakistan
- Agreement with Azerbaijan over building a railway and highway despite their divergent positions
- Signing a strategic cooperation document for 20 years with Turkmenistan
- Noticeable growth in bilateral trade and cooperation with Armenia

Iran’s Relations With the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan

- Border crisis
- Refugee crisis
- 3 challenges to developing Iran’s trade relations with Afghanistan

The Nature of Raisi’s Policy Toward Iran’s Asian Neighbors

- Iran focuses on the regional sphere more than the international one
- Adopting economic diplomacy and the shift to the East
- Improving relations with neighboring countries
الحالة الإيرانية: حكومة رئيسي ومتغيرات الساحة الداخلية والخارجية
SUMMARY
OF ANNUAL STRATEGIC
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ANNUAL STRATEGIC REPORT
Turbulence in the World Order and Its Regional Domino Effect