
IRAN'S NEW PIVOT TO CENTRAL ASIA

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High-ranking officials from Iran and Tajikistan made a total of three visits to Dushanbe and Tehran, respectively, in less than two months, a significant sign that after years of frosty relations, diplomatic ties are finally improving (Khovalar, February 23, March 29, April 5). Even more such bilateral visits are rumored for the near future. At the same time, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif recently concluded a grand tour (April 5) of the remaining four Central Asian republics (Iran, April 5), while other foreign ministry officials were in Vienna negotiating with the P4+1 (United Kingdom, France, Russia and China plus Germany) for keeping alive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear program (Iran, April 7). This renewed focus on Central Asia may be considered a new direction in Tehran's foreign policy toward the region.

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