

The Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy and Its Effect on Cooperation with Iran

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Abstract

Since 2000, Putin with his intellectual spectrum, backed by the factors of his power, the restoration of Russian credibility at regional and global levels, as well as the process of Eurasianism and Neo-Eurasianism was included in the foreign policy agenda. Accordingly, the questions of the research are, how has Russia behaved in its foreign policy in the post-2000 period whilst pursuing national goals and interests, and what are the hallmarks of its behavioral model? What effect has the change in Russia's foreign policy had on the process of increasing regional cooperation with Iran? The Increasing Iran-Russia cooperation to the military and security levels is defined in the context of Russia's macro-foreign policy strategy against US unilateralism and the use of Iran's capacity to manage regional developments. This study shows that Iran is an effective and influential regional partner for Russia in this important period. Based on the theory of neoclassical realism as a theory for explaining foreign policy, internal intellectual and cultural factors and variables of Russian politics, as well as the most important regional and transnational variables affecting the process and behavior of Russian foreign policy has been discussed.

Keywords: *Eurasianism, Russian revanchism, Ukraine crisis, Crimea annexation, Skripal crisis, Sanction*

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Introduction

There have always been many questions and doubts about the future of Russian foreign policy strategies, as heir of the Eastern superpower, and these doubts and ambiguities remain to this day. Although there is almost a realistic discourse in Russian foreign policy after 2000, this does not mean that there are no other discourses, including liberal westernization, balanced by the spectrum of Eurasianism and nationalism. The empowerment of either of these spectrums can help to determine or change the direction of Russia's major policies.

At present, coordination between different levels of domestic, foreign and economic policy plays a decisive role in the success of any country's macro strategies. The international system seems to have entered a new era of evolution over the last two decades. In this situation, the great powers seek to take a higher position or maintain the status quo, which raises the questions: what pattern of sustainability does Russia, as a major power, follow in its global, regional and peripheral politics? Does Russia have a stable conduct in foreign policy or is it variable? Is it possible to draw a clear pattern for Russian foreign policy during this period?

At this point, Russian foreign policy appears to be closely analyzed in the context of a dynamic orientalism, retaliatory, and balancing approach to the West, and a regional stabilizing balance between the Iranian-Arab-Israeli and convergence abroad as well. This research attempts to study the current actions, developments, trends, with regard to the upstream documents of the Russian Federation's foreign policy and national security, to gain a clear understanding of the pattern of Russian foreign policy behavior in

the last two decades. The Russian Federation plays an important role in regional developments and international concerns. Therefore, a relatively accurate understanding of Russia's foreign policy agenda will be effective in shaping the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This research will be useful in this regard.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of realism in foreign policy is deeply rooted in sociology and history. Schweller's work emphasizes domestic foreign policy and his theory can express differences in the foreign policies of countries (Schweller, 1997: 30). This has not been addressed in Waltz's neorealist theory.

Thus, neoclassical realists argue that understanding the relationship between power and politics requires a close analysis of the context in which the foreign policy is shaped and practiced (Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth, 1992: 11). Neoclassical realism is based on the assumption that paradigmatic realism contains many dependent theories and does not necessarily disprove its earlier theories (Wohlforth, 2011: 443-446). For some theorists, neoclassical realism is a realistic theory for foreign policy. While the theory of international politics seeks to explain international phenomena, foreign policy theory seeks to explain the ontology of foreign policy (Kitchen, Nicholas, 2010: 119-121). Neoclassical realism is an attempt to systematize broad and varied realistic views, whilst acknowledging the complexity of international relations and also considering the events a reflection of various factors (Kitchen, Nicholas, 2010: 116-117). The interests of the units in the international system must be varied and different. Like other realistic branches, Waltz's realism embraces diversity in interests, but considers that first and foremost, that all governments seek to achieve security regardless of their internal distinctions (Waltz, 1979: 121-123).

Neoclassical realism argues that a country's ambition is rooted in its foreign policy and the related factors of power, because systemic pressures alter the relationship of unit-level variables such

as decision-makers' perceptions and government structures (Lobell, Ripsman, Taliafeero 2009: 4-6.). Through neoclassical realism one can begin to analyze Russian foreign policy, and consider the role of its domestic and international structures as factors in foreign policy.

Russia's foreign policy has always been associated by ambiguity, complexity and conflict. One of the most important issues in the formulation of Russian foreign policy is the conflicts that occur at the intellectual-cultural levels, in political parties and groups, as well as in the reproduction of different and sometimes contradictory approaches. The complexity and ambiguity of Russian foreign policy decisions and actions has resulted. Some analysts regard the foreign policy of countries as the result of the thinking, beliefs or personality of leaders, and argue that continuity and change in policies are a function of continuity and change in elites (Rashidi, 1395:250). Accordingly, the Kremlin has been planning and directing Russian foreign policy in a variety of ways.

The most important feature of Russia's domestic foreign policy environment in the post-Soviet era was the diversification of domestic factors in the intellectual, cultural, institutional, civic, spheres. As a consequence of the decision-making process in Russian foreign policy in the 1990s, the country had become chaotic. This was a kind of pluralistic chaos, with various interests and concepts, instead of national interests, in the field, resulted in inefficiency the policies and failure to achieve the stated goals were in foreign relations. In the external environment, there are also growing regional and international developments, including globalization, international economic developments, the process of European integration, US expansionism, China and India's increasing power, the expansion of NATO and the European Union to the East, terrorism and threats. In these complex conditions, the lack of realism concerning domestic and international developments during the Yeltsin era and the failure to conform to the policies and goals set by the external realities, led to a lack of understanding of environmental developments, the inability

adoption of scenario planning and ultimately decision making. The consequence was nothing more than the passivity and decline of Russia's place in international arrangements.

From the point of view of many foreign policy and international relations analysts, since Putin's rise to power in March 2000, there has been a positive shift in Russian foreign policy from idealism to realism, from instability to stability, and from irrational approaches to a relatively rational approach. This policy has received less negative feedback from its internal and external environments than in the previous period. The acute economic problems of Russia in the 1990s were the most important cause of its passivity, on the contrary, improving its economic position at the beginning of the new millennium, more than Putin's policies stemming from rising global prices of energy carriers and oil prices. It was Russia's economy, which had a significant impact on Moscow's growing boldness in international and foreign policy. An important point in Russian foreign policy under Putin, is the escalation of anti-US sentiments. In some cases, the ambiguity and unpredictability of Russian foreign policy under Putin has been related to the nature of other countries' behavior toward Moscow, including Washington's aggressive approach (Nouri, 2010: 5-6).

Generally, Russian society has experienced various transitional periods since the beginning of the modernization process in Russia, which has had different and sometimes contradictory effects in Russian domestic society.. Russia is witnessing extremely complex contradictions, dichotomies and social divisions. An important part of these contradictions and gaps is undoubtedly intellectual, cultural and identity concerns. In order to understand how Russian foreign policy is formulated, internal factors and cultural-intellectual currents affecting Russian foreign policy formulation including isolationism, interventionism, westernization and tendency to liberalism, Eastern and Oriental identity, Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism need to be examined. The importance of near abroad states to Russian political and security discourse, the economic security strategy of the Russian Federation until 2030

(threats and opportunities) the Russian energy security doctrine, as well as the national maritime policy of Russia are important internal variables influencing policymaking, and are, therefore, noteworthy.

I- Intellectual-Cultural Attitudes

Slavicism – Isolationism: Russian isolationists, nationalists, and Slavacists tend to focus inwardly on Russian reconstruction and development so as to preserve its unique culture and values. From their point of view it is necessary to restore Russia's important role and status in the world, and in that regard strive, also, to prevent cultural contamination. The thoughts and trends of Slavicism do not deny Russia's European identity, but at the same time, it portrays Western culture as a decadent and declining one and emphasizes, instead, Russian introversion. (Rashidi, 2015: 255). Slavists emphasize the unique thought and exclusive culture of Russia. Thus the task of Western civilization to lead and guide the international community has come to an end. They believe that in the new circumstances, it is only Russia that can bring about genuine liberation by referring to Russian traditions and the spirituality of Orthodox Christianity (Colae and Rashidi, 2009: 211).

Interventionism: Opposing isolationists, interventionists believe Russia has a special message for the world and by presenting interpretations of Russian history and culture, that message could be circulated. What gives this orientation a special meaning is that Russia cannot ignore world affairs and retreat within its borders; it must act from a position of universal power outside its borders. In addition to the cultural principles of this orientation, proponents of this approach emphasize their belief in the realities of international politics and foreign policy, and recognize the necessity of Russia engaging with all of the players in the world, as this will aid national goals and interests (Goble: 1994:13-16).

Westernization and Liberalism: The Russians have no consensus on Russian civilization and cultural identity. There have been several distinct responses about Russian civilization based on

socio-cultural spectrums including: Westernism, Orientalism, Eurasianism and Slavism. Westerners (Atlanticists) regard Russia as an inseparable part of Western civilization and culture, and believe it shares a common destiny with European countries. Accordingly, they defend the spread of the influence of European institutions in the Russian Federation. They insist on the shared values of civil liberties and democracy, human rights, the free market, and call for comprehensive and strategic partnerships with Western countries (Coolae, 1995: 76).

Westernization in Russia has a long history. The Russians recognize Peterborough as the father of a new Russia who has made great efforts to modernize Russia and steer it toward Westernization. At different times, Westerners sought to integrate Russia and Europe with greater focus on seizing political power in the space created immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They argued that the Bolsheviks and the Soviet system, in opposition to the West, denied Russia's cultural identity and acted against it during the Cold War. Thus, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia was given an opportunity to transform itself into a recognizable Western state (Rashidi, 2015: 253-254).

Liberalism and communism is the ideological divide in Russian society. Liberals defend the free market and the capitalist economy, believe in political freedom and defend civil society, and democratic values. Therefore, while trying to implement a free economic and political system domestically, in foreign policy they see the need to call for expanding relations with Western countries, especially WTO members. (Rashidi, 2015: 255).

Pro-Western liberals support the expansion of Russia's relations with Europe and the United States. They emphasize the necessity for widespread reforms in Russia so as to make use of Western market economy and models of democracy, as well as to take steps to create a system of collective security in the direction of globalization and facilitation of global trade. Some liberals in the early 1990s expressed their goal: integration with the West. This view was the center of gravity in Boris Yeltsin's foreign policy. The

idea that Russia should pursue its foreign policy to pursue Western countries was based on the assumption that Russia would soon become a fully Western country. In this context, westernization was expected to affect all traditional Russian imagery as a superpower and reduce the role of the government, via market economy development and the patterns of Western democracy. This discourse was prevalent in the early years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But it soon lost its appeal and was challenged by pro-government ideas. It was replaced by insistences on the revival of Russia's historical status as an independent superpower (Kuchins and Zevelev, 2012:143-146).

In the Soviet Union era, Russian foreign policy was shaped in opposition to the West. In this sense, they defined their communist life as opposed to the Western liberal one, and believe that the only alternatives to the Western cultural system are Marxism and Communism. With the fall of Marxism from the stage of world politics, and the rise of national revolutions against communist political tendencies, the values of communism collapsed and new laws and values emerged. Russian domestic and foreign policy was such that the logic and political philosophy of Russian foreign policy experienced its first turn of life, and a Western world order was introduced in the place of Marxism. Thus, a lack of conflict with the West in order to achieve development was on the agenda of the Russian liberals (Rashidi, 1395: 7). During this period, Russia tended to coexist with the West and the capitalist world (Legold 2003: 59-65). The Proponents of this approach define Russia as a member of the Western world. It follows that some have described the emergence of Westernization in Russian foreign policymaking as a reaction to Russia's strategic distance from the Western world during Soviet Communist rule. As such, the period emphasized the need to join the West as Russia's first biological-cultural-identity origin (Legvold, 2007: 70-73).

One of the consequences of the emergence of Atlanticism in Russian foreign policy, which coincided with the Yeltsin era (1990), was the attempt to join the European Democratic Club with

a free market economy. To this end, Russia joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and expanded its cooperation with the European Union, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and the Seven Group, and reduced its decisive presence in the former Soviet republics and Asian countries, including the Middle East (Koolae 2016 : 74-76). During this period, Russia sharply distanced itself from anti-Western politics and sought to pursue its interests through proximity to the West and compromise with Europe and the US. At this point in time, Moscow based its foreign policy on Russia's transformation into a state based on legal standards; the creation of a civil society and a rapid modernization of the country were pursued so as to establish a market economy. In this regard, Kremlin sought to define itself as a part of the geopolitics of the West (Shuaib, 2016: 75-76). Therefore, following the convergence and attention of Western countries, they put market economics and democratic slogans on their foreign policy agenda.

Despite Russia's emphasis on proximity to the West during this period on one hand, developments and the structural nature of the international system, on the other hand, made Russia's political forces to pave the way for foreign policy. In response to the Westernization of Russian foreign policy, nationalist conservatives insisted on a return to Russia's glorious history and values. And on the other hand, the moderates believed that they had a historical role for Russia at the borders of Europe and Asia, and saw Russia as a mixed culture of Europe and Asia that should lead and manage these two divisions as leaders (Light, 2001: 86-90). Thus, Yeltsin's Westernization was influenced by conservative, nationalist forces as well as Eurasianists. Of course, this development did not mean the withdrawal of the West from Russia's strategic sphere. Rather, its importance has always been maintained (Alihoseini&Aeinehvand, 2015:135-136).

Orientalism: Orientalists consider Russia to be an Eastern civilization and one of the Asian civilizations. They argue that Russia's foreign policy should be adjusted to the eastern region.

(Rashidi, 2015: 254). Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) by the Ottoman Empire is a turning point in the beginning of Russia's Orientalism. France and Britain's support for the Ottomans in this war has been a bitter memory in Russia's national history (Duncan, 2000: 43-44). Therefore, the Russians, influenced by thinkers such as Nikolai Nanylfsky and Konstantin Leontiev, paid attention to their distinction from Europe and believed in the development of Russia's cooperation with Asia (Rashidiov, 2015: 254).

Orientalists define Russia as a country with an Eastern culture, rules and values that must adhere not only to official politics but also to the public sphere. An important consequence of this mode of thinking was the emphasis on the Eastern world in Russian foreign policy and the attempt to restore Russia's ancient status among the Eastern civilizations and to resist against the Western conquest. From this point of view, Russia is the leader of the Eastern countries, and must pay attention to the preservation and protection of their cultural and civilization (Duncan, 2000: 45-50).

Slavicism and Russian nationalism, which had tangible manifestations in Russian foreign policy, can be considered as an Orientalist aspect or Russia's eastern bio-world (Hosseini, Abolhasani, 2015: 7-8). This approach was often practiced by the Russian tsars and used by Stalin, particularly during World War II. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the fragmentation of the empire and the severe economic, social and political problems were very painful for Russian nationalists. The scholars of this school believed that republics which separated from the Soviet Union should somehow rejoin Russia. Contemporary Russian nationalism seeks not only to revitalize old values, but to rebuild and adapt it to new Russian conditions. They argue that the breakdown of the Soviet Union could be seen as an illegal act, and demanded a united and powerful government in the direction of Russian civilization and culture (Husseini, Abulhasani, Ibid: 9).

Thus, it can be understood that Slavism and nationalism have a strategic place in Russian foreign policy. However, developments

in Russia's foreign policy do not ignore the structure of the international system. In other words, the structure of the international system as a fixed element has always influenced Russian foreign policy (Roumi, 1977: 98-100).

Communism-Marxism: The communists have a nostalgic sense of the ideology of socialism and the former Soviet Union. Emphasis on the originality of society, the Soviet system, the redistribution of wealth, state capitalism, the struggle against liberalism and capitalism, and opposition to the Western free market are among the most important elements of Russian socialism and communism at present. They suggest reviving the position of the Soviet superpower, developing Russia's regional hegemony, developing ties with the countries of the region, and countering the influence of the United States on Russia's foreign policy agenda. It should be noted, however, that today's Russian communists pay attention to European socialism, the standards of civil society, and the democratic political system (Kuchins and Zevelev, 2012: 151-152).

From a phenomenological point of view, with regard to the intellectual and cultural currents affecting Russian foreign policy, it can be said that Marxism was the first idea to be identified. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the early years after the collapse of the complex, Russians continued to define themselves as a country with Marxist values and rules. According to this view, Russia is leading the Eastern bloc, which plays a role against the capitalist bloc as another pole of world power (Roumi, *Ibid*, 93-94).

In this period, Russian foreign policymaking was based on a conflict between the Marxism world and the liberalist world. During this period Russian political behavior had evolved so that the geopolitics of the world led communism and suppressed any tendency towards the West in its political geography (Husseini & Abolhassani, *Ibid*, 6).

Eurasianism - Neo-Eurasianism: Eurasianists believe that Russian civilization and identity were distinct from European and Asian civilizations. And they consider Russian culture and civilization as a cultural bridge between European and Asian

civilizations (Billington, 2006: 104). Eurasianism has its roots in the nineteenth century. At the time, a group of Russian intellectuals did not accept the Westernization of Russian identity. In 1829, for example, Peter Dachayev emphasized in his writings that Russia's identity was neither Eastern nor Western, but unique. (Larwell, 2009: 13-15). Also Dostoevsky in the early 1880s claimed that the Russians are as European as they are Asian; our mistake was to try to introduce ourselves as pure Europe (Mazurek, 2002: 105-111).

Due to the Bolshevik rule in the Soviet Union, the activities of the Eurasianists were limited. And many of them inevitably migrated to Europe. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they returned to Russia. After this period, Eurasianism grew and Westernism weakened. New Eurasianists such as Panarin, Zyuganov, and Dugin, despite their differences, emphasize Russia's geopolitical and cultural independence. And they believe that Russia has a civilization that has fundamental ties with Asia and the Islamic world.

Many modern Eurasianists, referring to Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations, believe that the world is facing an identity war of civilizations. In this identity war, Russian identity is threatened by Western civilization and identity, especially the United States. The new Eurasianists emphasize that Russia must prevent American domination of the Eurasian region (Rashidi, 2015:262-275).

In recent years, several factors have led experts to reconsider the nature of Russia's foreign policy. These include the growing hostility between Russia and the United States, the Ukraine crisis that led to the secession of Crimea and its annexation by Russia, and Russia's military presence in the Syrian crisis. These factors indicate that Russia's foreign policy has undergone a strategic transformation. This development is known as Neo-Eurasianism (Dugin, 2012: 20-21). Alexander Dugin is one of the most prominent thinkers in the field of neo-Eurasianism. By examining all theories of nationalism and Westernism, Dugin explained his theory of Eurasianism and Neo-Eurasianism. He says Eurasianism

is a political philosophy with three levels: domestic, middle and foreign. At the external level, this theory includes a multipolar world. That is, there are several global decision-making centers, one of them is Eurasia. Eurasianism at the middle level calls for convergence between the former Soviet republics while maintaining their national independence. Eurasianism at the level of domestic politics also focuses on building the political structure of society and respecting civil rights, as well as parts of the model of liberalism and nationalism. Based on Eurasianism, foreign policy is independent of globalization, the unipolar world, nationalism, imperialism, and liberalism. However, Eurasianism's foreign policy is a unique model (Alihosseini & Aeenehvand, 2015: 148-139).

Dugin considers the Eurasia region to be Russia's heritage and believes that it was a traditional Russian environment. Therefore, he emphasizes that the main goal of Russia's foreign policy should be to regain control of these areas and to support the Russians living in these areas. The environment that Dugin defines for Russian domination leads from the west to Europe, from the south to Central Asia, and from the east to China. According to Dugin, Eurasianism is a good opportunity to revive Russia's geopolitical power (Alihosseini & Aeenehvand, Ibid, 148). After explaining Eurasianism, Dugin seeks to clarify and explain its principles in Russian foreign policy. So he proposes a new definition of Eurasianism, namely neo-Eurasianism. In fact, Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism does not mean rejecting Eurasianism. Rather, it is a reconstruction of the important principles of Eurasianism with an emphasis on traditionalism and geopolitics. From this perspective, Dugin believes that Russia belongs culturally to an Eastern civilization. And as the leader of the Eastern Region, it is necessary to confront the unipolar world led by the United States. Dugin refers to Eurasia, a large Russian territory with allies such as Iran, Turkey, China, India, and some Eastern European countries. From Dugin's point of view, Eurasia has evolved from a geographical concept to an identity concept.

From Dugin's point of view, the important difference between Eurasianism and Neo-Eurasianism is that Neo-Eurasianism transcends geography and identity. And it is considered a system of consciousness that gives the Russians identity and existence. According to Dugin, Russia is at the center of this system. Accordingly, Russia must protect the region and rebuild and redefine its prestige. In general, Russian Eurasianism creates a new place for Russia in the world. Accordingly, a new foreign policy must be implemented. Russia's new foreign policy is dynamic and more active in countering US intervention. Dugin emphasizes the Slavic tradition and the Russian Orthodox Church, and he believes in the important role of identity and history in shaping the foundations of Russian identity (Roumi, *Ibid.* 100-104).

It is important to note that foreign policy does not necessarily take place in the context of ideas. Rather, structural necessities provide grounds for change in foreign policy and foreign policy ideas emerge from there. In other words, the evolution of political realities and foreign policy is not merely the product of intellectual systems. Intellectual systems are, also, the result of a crisis of facts. With the crisis and inefficiency of the foreign policy strategy, a new system emerges, which results in the formation of a new foreign policy (Roumi-*Ibid.*, 99-103).

Eurasianism paved the way for Orientalism in Russian foreign policy, and its main principles were Russian Slavism and nationalism. Accordingly, Russia has defined its main policy components as Eastern. For this reason, Russia is trying to present itself as an important power and a major player in the region. In fact, Slavism and nationalism are in the context of Russian Orientalism. The Slavs are pessimistic and distrustful of Western powers. They want Russian foreign policy to focus on the environment (Aaron, 1998: 78-85).

Thus, in Slavism, Russia pursues its own protection. And that goal is at the heart of Russia's foreign policy. Russian nationalism is broader than Slavicism. Returning to the greatness of the Soviet era, regaining Russian power, and Russia's powerful role in the

Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus are among the most important aspirations of Russian nationalists (Karami, 2005: 64-66). Of course, Iran has an important place in Russia's Easternism, but it is not strategic for Russia. In fact, Russian Orientalism has been a restoration of Russia's credibility, culture, identity, and historical traditions. From this perspective, countries like Iran are so important to Russia that they contribute to Russia's strategic interests. These countries are helping strengthen Russia's political and economic bargaining against the United States (Roumi, Ibid .: 106-107).

II- Russia-US Conflict Zones

Central Asia and the Caucasus are among the most important areas of conflict between Russia and the United States. These areas are located in the geopolitical sphere of Russia. The Caucasus region was the border between the Warsaw Pact and the NATO Pact during the former Soviet Union. Geoeconomic and geopolitical issues have increased the importance of this region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States tried to enter Russia's traditional sphere of influence. US actions and interventions in the region have heightened Russia's security concerns, and in one instance this led to Russia's military confrontation with the Republic of Georgia in 2008. In fact, the United States has tried to contain Russia as a nuclear power and a geopolitical rival. The United States is trying to implement a policy of blockade against Russia. In the book *Geostrategy for Eurasia - Chessboard*, Brzezinski states three main goals for US presence in the region: to prevent the formation of an anti-American coalition, to establish a collaborative mechanism with regional partners for the regional interests of the United States, and stabilizing America's global position and emphasizing the lack of an alternative to the United States. To continue the US presence in the region, Brzezinski proposes that the United States strengthen the economic and military foundations of countries around Russia. It is also suggested that the exploitation of energy resources in these areas

should be put on the agenda. According to Brzezinski, these measures will strengthen these republics against Russia. And they will resist Russian influence (Simbar, Hedayati Shahidani, *Ibid*, 71).

In general, the most important issues from 2000 to 2006 were the war in Afghanistan, the deployment of US troops in some Central Asian republics, the Iraq war, NATO's expansion plan with the East, and the US withdrawal from some military alliances, including the IBM. Also important was US efforts in deploying missile defense shields in Eastern Europe. By 2006, Vladimir Putin had almost ignored US intervention in Russia's traditional sphere of influence, given Russia's structural constraints and the priority of the war on extremism. During this period, Putin did not strongly oppose US cooperation with some Central Asian republics and the Caucasus, but he always sought to strengthen the foundations of Russia's power. As Russia's oil revenues increased and its economic and military strength increased, so did Russia's confrontation with US policy. In fact, rising Russian oil revenues have played an important role in Russian-American relations (Shlapentokh: 2006, 22).

The United States' unilateralist policies and approaches, as well as its influence in the traditional regions of Russia, as well as the creation of color revolutions in some republics with the presence of the United States, have led Russia to adopt reciprocal policies against the United States (Simbar, Hedayati Shahidani, *Ibid*, 73).

Economic Modernization and Countermeasures Against the United States: The collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia reduced Russia's influence in the republic. The strength of pro-Russian political forces in Georgia has also severely diminished. The pro-American political spectrum seized power, and anti-Russian sentiment intensified. In this context, the crisis of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was significant (Alison, 2008: 5). Coinciding with Georgia's offer to join NATO, was Russia's support for the independence of South Ossetia and, it took military action against the Republic of

Georgia. In fact, the crisis in South Ossetia is the result of intensified confrontations between Russia and the United States (Gregorian, 2012: 1-4).

Tensions with the United States also increased during Medvedev's presidency. But during Barack Obama's presidency, relations between Russia and the United States changed somewhat. During this period, Russian-American relations moved toward balance and equilibrium. In fact, a great power like Russia in the Eurasian region had greatly reduced American maneuvering power, and the republics of this area regulated their relations with Russia. Russia reacted to any US intervention or regional influence. The United States has also sought to expand and deepen ties with countries in the region (Salzman, 2010: 32-36).

Medvedev tried to reorganize Russia's ailing economy. A new approach was, therefore, designed for the economy. Economic issues were neglected among security approaches. However, resolving Russia's economic problems has become a priority. The policy of pragmatism was based on attracting investment, new technologies and creating prosperity. They tried to implement economic policies even without relying on the oil, gas and energy industries. Russia has an important role to play in Europe's energy supply, but it has not grown enough in other areas of the economy and needs new technology. These issues have led to the reconstruction of economic infrastructure. At the same time, military infrastructure has developed.

On the other hand, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, although Russia lost some of its former strength and capabilities, it continued to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and could, therefore, affect the policies of the United States. In this way, the United States could not ignore Russia's important regional and international role (Rumer and Stent, 2009: 11-12).

Vladimir Putin believed that Russia's identity should be based on the historical tradition of great power. He considered the concept of great power to be one of the basic principles of Russian culture and spirit. He argued that these stable Russian historical and

cultural principles and patterns, regardless of domestic conditions, shape Russia's understanding of international developments. Accordingly, Russia has a large range of capabilities, including territorial size, geopolitical position, military and nuclear power, huge energy reserves and natural resources, intellectual and cultural capacities, as well as a large population and an important place in the international system, thus it should be a great power (Tatiana and Bogachevrov, 2004: 43-48).

The Normative Strategy of the Great Modern Power: This strategy was a reflection of the people's desire to improve the frustration caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian people faced many problems in the 1990s. One of the major issues in the 1990s was the identity crisis of the Russian people. Resolving these crises required the development of a normative strategy of modern great power.

Modern power is based on the principle that real power in the new international space is multidimensional. And Russia needs to be strong not only in military and political power, but also in economics, advanced technology and culture. For these reasons, Vladimir Putin, as a nationalist reformist, implemented a plan for Russia to become a large, modern, normative power with advanced technology, a dynamic, independent, internationally influential society, an active global actor and an important role to play in global trends.

In other words, Putin sought to make Russia a major power in the hardware and software sectors. He also tried to make Russia an influential and constructive player in the international arena. Putin has realistically considered the limitations of foreign policy. He was fully aware of the shortcomings and believed in maintaining the status quo. He tried to make Russia a normative country in the international system. Due to limited resources, he tried to protect Russia's national interests. Russia's strategy, while maintaining the status quo, has also paved the way for changes in Russia's foreign policy. And it contained a kind of realistic idealism. Putin's most important statement, which showed his nostalgic sense, was his

desire to revive the power of the former Soviet Union. He described the collapse of the Soviet Union as a geopolitical catastrophe of the century (Ternin, 2005: 11-13).

Energy Diplomacy Strategy: Putin was well aware of the growing role of energy in global economic and political equations. Energy security is the most important global economic concern in the 21st century. Any country that has access to energy resources will have more power in the international system. Russia, as the world's energy hub, plans to use energy tools in its relations with other countries, and it intends to use this tool in its foreign policy as well. Russia has huge energy resources and plans to play an important role in the global economy and the international system as a superpower. Russia has an aggressive approach to implementing energy diplomacy strategy (Kempe, 2006: 8-10).

Economic-military capabilities: 1990s due to high levels of production reduction, reduction of domestic and foreign investment, reduction of scientific and technological capabilities, agricultural recession, disruption of monetary and banking system, reduction of government revenues, and growth of foreign debt, declining decade It was Russia's economy.

The element of economy was very important in determining the position of countries after the Cold War. Russia's economic weakness was largely a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yeltsin's inappropriate policies. These factors led to the decline of Russia's position in the international system (Nouri, *ibid*, 184). Russia borrowed about \$ 50 billion in foreign currency during the 1990s. And due to its delay, it paid \$ 80 billion. Russia also had \$ 165 billion in foreign debt in 2000. In the 1990s, with the encouragement of Western countries, economic reforms were put on the agenda with the aim of creating a capitalist system. These reforms, regardless of Russia's infrastructure, not only did not have positive results, but were the main cause of the economic crisis of the 1990s.

Putin has made economic renewal his main goal, in consideration of Russia's infrastructure problems. He also said that

the priority of foreign policy is to increase economic interests and converge with the world economy. He emphasized three important principles: supporting Russia's economic interests in the regional and international arenas, active participation in international economic institutions and removing the barriers to global economic activity. Vladimir Putin considered a strong economy necessary for an effective presence in the international system. He said in a speech that as long as Russia's economy is weak, it will not become a major power. Russia's national security document addresses the economic crisis as a threat to national security.

Putin's reformist economic team, along with the parliament, drafted a set of economic reform laws aimed at economic modernization. Under these laws, the creation of efficient economic institutions, the creation of private property, the active financial and monetary system, the creation of appropriate tax and land laws, the facilitation of the free market, the elimination of unnecessary laws, and other laws related to bankruptcy and monopolies were considered (Mau, 2006: 7-8). Russia's foreign debt reached its lowest level since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 2005. That's less than 25 percent of GDP. Russia's foreign debt in 2003 was about \$ 190 billion, close to the federal government's one-year budget (Shalapentokh, 2005: 5). Putin knew that rising energy prices would be one of the key factors in Russia's economic development. He believed that Russia, as a regular energy supplier, would not achieve its goals. Putin was aware of the growing need for energy in Eastern and Western countries. So he tried to make Russia an energy superpower. Accordingly, he introduced Russia as a stable and reliable supplier of energy to the world. He also put the modernization and reconstruction of energy industries on the agenda.

In a general assessment of the economic situation during Putin's presidency, it seems that the Russian economy is still facing structural problems, despite the plans that have been implemented (Mao, 2006: 3)

Regarding the military situation, it can be said that old military

equipment, lack of adequate military training, and most importantly, the army's economic problems have been among the major challenges since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Hedenskog, 2005: 14-16). In his 2003 annual address to the Federation Council, Vladimir Putin described military reform and the modernization of the armed forces as one of his top priorities. His goal was to build new weapons and equipment, strengthen military personnel, and create a professional army to support Russia's all-round development process. Accordingly, targeting the allocation of the army budget, increasing the efficiency of the armed forces, modernizing military equipment (conventional and non-conventional), as well as concentrating military policies in the Ministry of Defense without the intervention of other authorities were on the agenda (Shevtsova, 2003: 26).

III- Regional and Trans-regional Variables

Near abroad: According to Russian officials, areas close to Russia are considered important for Russia's national security. Therefore, control of these areas is essential. Napoleon's and Hitler's invasion of Russia from the western borders will not be erased from the minds of the Russian people. So Russia has tried to create a buffer zone on its borders (Kaddorah, 2014: 4-6). Published documents on Russian security policy indicate the behavior of the country. The Concept Paper of Russian Foreign Policy in 2000 emphasizes Russia's close relations with the outside world and countering the presence of trans-regional actors. This document emphasizes the orientation of foreign policy based on geopolitical interest and affiliations (Kassianov, 2000:825).

Eurasianism has played an important role in Russian foreign policy in recent years. It is visible in the Russian foreign policy document. Russia should also be involved in international affairs and global management, according to the document, and contribute to the formation of a new international system by rejecting the monopoly system. Russia's foreign policy document outlines the prospect of becoming a major world power for Russia. And

regional and global crisis management is not done without Russia's active presence. In the documents of the year, the principles of Russian foreign policy were also expressed in the form of a military doctrine for use in the area around Russia. The increase in Russian capabilities was emphasized. There were also concerns about regional crises. The expansion of NATO to the Russians and terrorist activity and extremism have been Russia's most important concerns. Before the crisis in Ukraine, Russia had emphasized increased cooperation with the country as an important partner. According to these documents, Russia's goal is to become a respected global power. There is a consensus among Russia's domestic groups that Russia should be recognized as a major world power. This new nationalism emphasizes Eurasian geopolitics (Alihosseini & Aenehvand: 2015:11).

This idea is also referred to as the third way. Eurasianist ideas emphasize Russia's management of the entire Eurasian region. They have also put forward a plan for global ocean control (Koulieri, 2006:25-29). The two main pillars of Eurasianism are geopolitics on the one hand and Russian identity on the other. Some have divided Eurasianism into types, namely expansion oriented, civilization-oriented, stability mechanism and geoeconomist. Eurasianists believe the divergence of its branches is superficial. The depth of their theory is Russia and its regions of influence (Tsygankov, 2003:102-105).

Geopolitical Aspects: Russia has always played an important role in classical geopolitical theories. Russia's geopolitical position has been raised in recent years. Research centers and scholars such as Kolosov, Mironenko, Nartov and Trenin are researching and emphasizing Russian geopolitics. According to geopolitical theory, Russian foreign policy has taken on a global dimension and he strongly opposes NATO's expansion of its security borders (Okunev, 2013:69).

Russia's most important foreign goals in the near future include: restoring Russian influence, maintaining territorial integrity, preventing instability at the southern borders, preventing

the presence of trans-regional powers, and protecting Russians in other countries (Sergunin,2000:238-239).Although Putin stresses the importance of the near-outside region, this does not signal an imperialist approach in the region. Reconstruction of the former Soviet era is not on the agenda. Russia respects the independence and foreign policy of the countries in the region. On this basis, he emphasizes that Russia is helping them (Rashidov, 2005:117-118).

NATO Expansion to the East and Threat to Russia's Security: By examining Russian history and the theories of state and non-state elites, we find that the geopolitical logic of Russian foreign policy guides. In the logic of geopolitical realism, in every era of world politics, several great powers have a sphere of influence. The entry of a great power into another sphere of influence is considered a threat. This logic has nothing to do with countries being democratic or undemocratic. Russian officials have repeatedly said in recent years that they will not allow Ukraine to join NATO. In this regard, the Chief of the Joint Staff of the Russian Armed Forces announced in 2008, Russia could use military force and other means to prevent Ukraine and Georgia from joining NATO (Shelest, 2015). Therefore, in order to realize this idea, Russia has had to deploy security frameworks appropriate to the structure and discourse surrounding its peripheral environment, the outside.

After the color revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, and the new wave of NATO expansion to the Baltic states in 2004, Russia was determined to halt the expansion of NATO by any means (Tsygankov, 2015:281-282). Russia's new defense and security doctrines emphasized that Russia could use advanced and modern weapons as part of strategic deterrence (military.ir.05.12.2019.in Persian). Russia's most important stance on threats posed by NATO's expansion to the East has been addressed in the National Security Document of 2020. The main aspects of this can be seen in the US's bullying unilateralism about NATO's expansion to the East and the US missile defense system in Europe.

Russia's national security strategy in 2020 is in stark contrast to the US international model. The US is exerting its influence in the

Caucasus and supporting NATO's surge in Russian security (Ismaeili, Ibid, 142). Russia's anti-Georgian military actions in the summer, and the use of strategic planes over Europe, showed that Russia's response to NATO's expansion into its security sphere was serious. All of Russia's political and cultural groups are opposed to NATO's plans to expand to the east and to Russia's security sphere. And they see it as disturbing regional stability (Shafi'i and Mahmoudi). Russia, therefore, opposes any expansion of NATO into its own backyard, and its example has been strong opposition to Ukraine and Georgia's membership. It is noteworthy that Russia has cooperated with NATO in partnership structures such as the Permanent Joint Council. Of course, any future Russian cooperation with NATO depends on Europe and the US recognizing Russia's important role in the near-term (Kiani, 43-44-csr.ir.03.10.2019).

Ukraine Crisis and Crimea's Annexation: After the overthrow of Viktor Yanukovich in 2014, the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine began, and Crimea, which has a strategically important position, joined Russia in a referendum. Crimea has a unique economic and strategic position. Seventy percent of Crimean people are Russian. This region was of particular importance to Russia. The United States and its allies should not focus on westernizing Ukraine, says John Merschheimer, they need to turn Ukraine into a neutral buffer zone between Russia and NATO, much like Austria's position during the Cold War. If Western countries continue their current policy on Ukraine, hostility toward Russia will increase and it will bring the Republic of Ukraine into a destructive process. This will cause all parties to lose. Western countries can change their position and contribute to the democracy and development of Ukraine, instead of threatening Russia, and aim to rebuild Russia's relations with the West. This will, in fact, be a win-win game for all parties (Mersheimer, 2014:11, 13). The crisis in Ukraine has been the culmination of Russian-West confrontation during Putin's presidency. The turning point is the strategy of expanding Russian influence. Of course, this confrontation is likely

to result in long-term political and economic costs and sanctions for Russia.

IV- Escalation after Ukraine Crisis

NATO's Support for Ukraine: On November 25, 2018, three Ukrainian warships illegally crossed the Russian maritime border and entered the Kerch Strait and the Azov Sea. Ukrainian warships ignored the warnings of the Russian border guards and did dangerous maneuvers. Eventually, Russian forces clashed and arrested Ukrainian sailors. This crisis has led NATO to support Ukraine, and another crisis was added to the Russian-Western relations. Russian President Vladimir Putin has called the arrival of Ukrainian warships at Russian sea borders a provocative action. Putin recalled that Ukrainian military ships were the first to entered Russian national waters. So far this has not happened and this is a very important issue for Russia. Putin, insisting that the Russian border guards had done their job, and said Ukrainian warships ignored Russian border guards' warnings. Thassis, the President of Ukraine also mutually said that Vladimir Putin seeks to revive the Old Russian Empire (gazeta.ru.29.01.2020).

Subsequently, a meeting of NATO member ambassadors was held in Brussels. The meeting examined the crisis in the Gulf of Kerch and the Sea of Azov. NATO member states issued a statement saying Russia should not use military force against Ukrainian ships, and Russia must immediately release Ukrainian sailors and ships. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) officials said in a statement on the seizure of Ukrainian ships by Russia, that the two sides should exercise restraint. At the same time, it fully supported Ukraine's positions in this regard. The NATO statement urged Russia to provide free shipping and access to Ukrainian ports (Rasisca.ru.12.04.2019).

The document emphasizes that NATO is monitoring the situation and providing political and practical support to Ukraine within the framework of existing cooperation. Meanwhile, the Russian Federal Security Service's PR department had discovered

the order for Ukrainian warships to enter the Gulf of Kerch. According to the evidence, Ukrainian warships were on a mission from the port of Odessa to the port of Berdyansk via the Gulf of Kerch. The Russian president noted that two Ukrainian security service agents were present and led the operation among Ukrainian ships (tass.ru/05.12.2018). The Ukrainian crisis was the first time since the Soviet Union's collapse that Russia had to organized efforts outside its borders to safeguard its national interests in opposition to the West.

Skripal Crisis: Hostile relations between Russia and the West have entered a new phase with the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in southern Britain. The Western countries accused Russia of poisoning them. Sergei Skripal was a Russian intelligence officer sentenced to prison for spying for Britain. Subsequently, in the exchange of spies between Russia and the US, they were exchanged and later delivered to Britain. The wave of accusations against Russia intensified in this case. European countries, as well as the United States, expelled Russian diplomats. In this crisis, the United States and more than 20 European countries expelled 150 Russian diplomats. The United States expelled sixty diplomats and twelve Russian permanent representatives to the United Nations. From Russia's point of view, the concerted action of the Western countries, and the expulsion of Russian diplomats, signified their plan to pressure and isolate Russia. Russia also expelled Western and American diplomats. And the US Consulate General in St. Petersburg closed. NATO also expelled Russian diplomats, which was heavily criticized by Russia (Parstoday.com.In Persian.10.08.2019).

According to Western countries, Russia has used banned chemicals to poison Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal. Of course, there is no evidence for this charge (gazeta.ru.29.01.2020). Accordingly, the United States sought to place Russia in diplomatic and economic isolation by imposing numerous sanctions on various economic and financial areas, as well as individuals and legal entities.

The sanctions regime against Russia: The Russian government has acknowledged that US and European sanctions have seriously damaged Russia's economy. Russian government officials say the economic damage caused by the sanctions is estimated at more than \$ 3.5 billion a year. However, Russian officials say that despite the sanctions, Russia has made a significant contribution to global trade in energy, raw materials and petroleum products. However, sanctions against Russia have reduced Russia's revenues. An accurate assessment of the effects of sanctions on the Russian economy has not yet been made, but the harmful effects of these sanctions cannot be denied (<https://gazeta.ru/politics.29.01.2020>).

According to economists, sanctions could devalue the ruble and create problems for the government. Russia's Economic Development Ministry has not confirmed the severity of the economic impact and damage caused by US sanctions on Russia. Russian officials say US sanctions cannot put serious pressure on Russia's economy, and Russia has enough ability to counter US sanctions (<https://russian.rt.com.12.04.2019>).

V- Iran-Russia Relations

With the evolution of Russia's foreign policy in recent years, the level of cooperation between Iran and Russia in order to manage regional crises has undergone significant quantitative and qualitative changes. Iran and Russia have common interests in regional issues and are forced to cooperate with each other, including in the Caucasus, Caspian Sea, Middle East and Afghanistan. Over the past two decades, the dynamics of Russo-Iranian relations have been extremely complex and, to a certain extent, unpredictable for other international players. It is difficult to find another country whose relations with Moscow have experienced so many complex and twists in such a relatively short period. Periods of active political dialogue between the two governments have been suddenly interrupted by long pauses, with Moscow and Tehran accusing each other of failing to meet treaty commitments or keep promises. (<http://mirec.ru/index.10.03.2020>)

Russia's attitude toward Iran's nuclear activities is similarly ambiguous. On the one hand, Moscow has periodically offered constructive proposals aimed at settling the problem through purely diplomatic means, opposing strict unilateral sanctions and insisting that Iran's intentions are peaceful and in compliance with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. On the other hand, Russia has permitted the adoption of several UN Security Council measures against Iran's nuclear program (i.e., Resolutions 1696, 1737, 1747, 1803, 1835, 1929), creating the legal base for the imposition of both multilateral and unilateral punitive measures (<http://kremlin.ru/news/15.03.2020>).

Despite this seeming contradiction, Moscow's behavior becomes clearer and more predictable when one looks at the many different institutional forces at play in its policy formulation process. Currently, several public and private Russian actors have important ties with Iran, and their interests and activities therefore determine the development of bilateral relations (Kozhanov, 2012:2-4).

The Caucasus: Once Moscow began to recover from the political and economic turmoil of the 1990s, Iran gradually began assuming importance in Russia's plans to reestablish its presence in the Caucasus and other regions, in part due to the above-described similarities in their approaches to certain issues there. Today, for example, both Tehran and Moscow are striving to settle the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh, a nearby region that remains in dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Despite Iran's exclusion from the Minsk group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which the UN Security Council assigned to mediate the dispute, Moscow still takes Iran's views on the problem into account. Tehran has close ties with Armenia and relatively good relations with Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, allowing it to influence their positions. Moreover, Iran's perception of Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent political player more or less corresponds with Russian interests.

The Iranian government has stepped up with an initiative to

settle the conflict solely within the framework of the six regional states (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Russia, and Turkey), without the mediation of the OSCE or other non-regional powers. Moscow welcomed the idea although its current tensions with Georgia and its desire to take advantage of the Minsk group's potential have made it unwilling to accept the proposal as of yet, Russia does not deny that it might pursue this initiative later (Kozhanov, *Ibid*:13-16).

The Caspian Sea: Although Iran's view of certain Caspian issues is close to Russia's own, the two countries are far from complete unanimity. Serious contradictions have emerged between them regarding territorial division of the sea. Initially, Tehran supported the Russian idea of communal usage and exploitation of water and mineral resources. By the end of the 1990s, however, Iranian authorities changed their mind and began insisting on the division of the water basin in equal shares between the five littoral states (Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan). Since 2008, these territorial claims have only increased; for example, Tehran was ready to support Kazakhstan's idea of creating national sovereignty zones along the shores of littoral countries.

Central Asia and Afghanistan: Iran is an important Russian partner in Central Asia. Tehran has long considered the area a diplomatic priority and has persistently tried to increase its presence in the region's former Soviet republics since the USSR's collapse. At the same time, taking into account the importance of dialogue with Moscow, Iranian authorities have sought to avoid irritating Russia and have thus never officially positioned themselves as Russian rivals in the region. On the contrary, Iran tends to depict Russia as a reliable partner in Central Asia, periodically cooperating on economic projects and political issues, whether bilaterally or within the framework of regional organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the SCO.

The Russian government opposes Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons, believing that such a development would drastically

change the balance of power in the region, and not in Moscow's favor. As stated by some government experts, a nuclear Iran could be expected to conduct more aggressive and independent policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and to serve as an example for Middle Eastern countries with less stable regimes thinking about developing their own weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time, Russian politicians and experts argue that the simmering nuclear dispute between Iran and the West has certain positive implications. First, it limits the West's economic presence in Iran, creating additional opportunities for Russian companies to penetrate the Iranian economy. Second, the dispute is seen as an ironclad way of preventing American-Iranian rapprochement. Russian politicians strongly believe that Moscow would lose its political and economic position in Iran immediately after the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Washington. As a result, some Russian analysts close to government circles unofficially state the need to freeze the situation and sustain the simmering dispute for as long as possible (Ibid, 18-21). In other words, the Russian position on the nuclear issue cannot be called either pro-Iranian or pro-American. Instead, Moscow balances between the United States, Europe, and Israel, on one side, and the Islamic Republic on the other, without any attempt to join them. It also insists that the nuclear issue be settled diplomatically because it does not want a new zone of conflict and instability near the Russian border.

Moreover, Russian authorities clearly understand that any alliance or strategic partnership with Iran would inevitably aggravate their relations with the world's leading countries. Even formal recognition of Iran's priority in Russian foreign policy would harm Moscow's dialogue with a number of countries whose relations with the Islamic Republic are uneasy (e.g., the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and certain smaller Persian Gulf countries). As a result, despite the fact that positive dialogue with Tehran is in its interests, Moscow carefully monitors the development of The two countries relations in order to prevent

them from exceeding the level at which they would endanger relations with other countries.

Russian-Iranian Partnership in Syria: Moscow and Tehran have developed a working relationship in Syria, even though they have their own interests. Moscow's decision to become directly involved in the Syrian civil war including cooperation with Iran was motivated by several concerns. First was a growing fear that Washington was preparing to overthrow the Assad regime and replace it with a friendly government, much like the United States had done in Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq in 2003, and Libya in 2011. The possibility of losing Syria was particularly alarming because Moscow had just lost its ally in Ukraine. The 2014 Ukrainian revolution had ushered in a pro-Western government in Kiev, further fueling Russian fears of U.S. activity (Saikal, 2019:223-226).

The Relations between Moscow and Tehran have been complicated in the past. However, the present day military cooperation of Russia and Iran in Syria is basically based on geopolitical and geostrategic interests. Although the overall interests of Russia and Iran are not completely convergent, the common element of preventing US from exercising another regime change in the region is the primary motivating factor behind this budding relationship and the cooperation between both countries in Syria.

In recent years, the most important cooperation between Iran and Russia has been in Syria. This level of military and security cooperation is unprecedented in the history of relations between the two countries. Some international relations observers see the two countries' cooperation as strategic, while others see it as a tactical and temporary one. The data of this study show that Iran is an effective and influential regional partner for Russia in this important period. And the relations between the two countries are not defined strategically.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to answer the questions; what behavioral model of Russian foreign policy has been on the agenda in the last two decades? What has changed in the direction of Russia's foreign policy? What will be the future of Russia's foreign policy? What effect has the change in Russia's foreign policy had on the process of increasing regional cooperation with Iran? The formulation and implementation of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in the framework of the theory of neoclassical realism was examined. And domestic, regional, and international variables affecting Russia's foreign policy model were studied. In the last two decades, Russia has pursued a model of foreign policy in order to restore its global credibility by creating intellectual and cultural cohesion within the country and paying attention to opportunities and threats, and the limitations of the international system. In order to achieve these goals, Russia has demonstrated active and dynamic foreign policy.

In the last two decades, especially after the Ukraine crisis, Russia has pursued a relatively successful foreign policy in various international relations, despite the problems with Europe and the United States, and it has tried to create a multi-polar world order. In recent years, the situation in the international system has become more complicated. In this context, Russia has adopted a foreign policy commensurate with the current situation. It seems that in 2020, instability in various regions and the international system will continue. Therefore, Russia's foreign policy must also be prepared to respond to future developments.

Russia has made significant strides in implementing its active and dynamic foreign policy model over the past two decades. Russia has tried to make a significant contribution to the creation of a new international system. Russia has realized that if it does not play a role in building a future international system, its national interests and security will not be secured. Accordingly, foreign policy has implemented Eurasianism and Orientalism. Among the important achievements in this field is the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the promotion of the BRICS

group, the trilateral cooperation of Russia-China-India, as well as the significant progress of the Eurasian Economic Union.



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