

Iran's Position in Putin's Doctrine of Eurasianism and the most Important Influencing Variables in the Nuclear Relations between two Countries

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Abstract

The position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Putin's doctrine of Eurasianism, especially after 2012, has gained considerable importance in Russia's foreign policy. In the light of Putin's Eurasianism discourse, the extensive relations between Iran and Russia in the political, economic, military, security, intelligence and nuclear fields were promoted to the level of two strategic allies. The main question raised in this research is, what was Iran's position in Putin's doctrine of Eurasianism? And what have been the most important influencing variables in the nuclear relations between the two countries? The findings of this research, which was carried out in a descriptive-analytical method and with a historical approach, show that the position of Iran in Putin's doctrine of Eurasianism is important in such a way that without Iran, the said doctrine will face serious problems and many variables will affect the increasing nuclear relations. It has been influential between the two countries, which shows the convergence of the societies and domestic elites between the two countries, the anti-Western foreign policy of the two countries, and the current international conditions resulting from the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Keywords: Putin's Eurasianism, Russia, Nuclear Variables, Iran, Iran's Position.

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Introduction

A review of the history of foreign policy during the Tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet Russian eras indicates that the idea of "Russia as a great power" has had a continuous impact on the mindset of foreign policy-makers in this country. At various junctures, weakness and strength have been a non-negotiable principle in their view. The recurring notion of "but it is a great power" implies that Russia, as a great power, has sought a distinctive path for its development, and "Great Powerism," signifying the nationalist supporters of Russia's greatness, is evident in the political literature of this country. Accordingly, the concept of "great power" can be considered as the foundation of Russia's national self-understanding, influencing not only the political elite but also the political mindset of the people in this country (Shevtsova, 2007, p. 892). This ideology, over the years, has been emphasized in various forms, such as being a "Eurasian great power" and one of the "major centers of the contemporary world," in Russia's foreign, military, and security policy documents (Nouri, 2010, p. 134).

Eurasia, as the largest landmass in the world, has always held geopolitical significance (Dandash, 2007, p. 79). As Alexander Gelyevich Dugin puts it, in the contemporary bipolar world, the Eurasian pole can act as a disruptor of this bipolar trend and shape a multipolar world. This concept is not merely geographical. Putin has not introduced a new concept with the Eurasian idea but has rather strengthened its historical essence. Russia's foreign policy, influenced by identity

dimensions, has moved towards acquiring roles such as a global great power, regional superpower, nuclear superpower, and also an energy superpower through the Eurasianist approach (Hadian & Zargari, 2018, p. 259). From the Eurasianist perspective, Iran is a steadfast ally for Russia and not a bargaining chip in Russia's relations with the West (Rostami, 2016, p. 206).

1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Discussion

1-1. Putin's Eurasianist Doctrine:

With Putin coming to power in 2000 and his pragmatic policies in the field of foreign affairs, as well as organizing domestic affairs, fundamental changes occurred in this country's relations with other major powers. A historical examination of Russia's relations with Iran from the perspective of Russian elites reveals that Iran has always been perceived as both an opportunity and a threat in Russian foreign policy. This perception is influenced by the competitions between Russia and other powers such as Britain and later the United States in Iran, the geographical proximity and neighborhood, historical, cultural, and identity commonalities between Iran and some regions of Russia, the competition of the two countries in energy markets and the mutual inclination of the two countries for regional influence expansion.

From another perspective, Putin's focus in this doctrine has led to the formation of a conceptual term called Putinism in international

relations. This perspective seeks a confrontational and revisionist approach to redress the humiliation resulting from the end of the Cold War, reaching its peak with the annexation of Crimea to Russia. Furthermore, Putin attempts to divert attention from internal issues by highlighting the weaknesses of the West. While Putin has proposed a plan for the Eurasian Union, China's progress in international affairs has hindered this plan (Etemad online: "Will Putinism Have a Good Outcome?", April 4th 2020). In recent times, during Putin's government, Russia has been accused of interfering in the US presidential elections, manipulating the Brexit referendum in Britain, and intervening in the presidential elections in France. It is claimed that Russia has utilized all possible social media infrastructures to influence the outcome of the US elections (Tose'e Irani Newspaper, "We will Penetrate your mind", April 4th 2020).

1-2. Iran's Position in Putin's Eurasian Doctrine:

From the perspective of Eurasian theorists, namely Dugin, Iran has emerged as a continental power that can, with a much greater difference than other Muslim countries in the region – some of which, like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, have merely become tools for Americans – fully follow the continental tradition of Russia. Dugin admires the 1969 revolution in Iran, which managed to restore the country to its own traditions. The alliance with Iran is seen as a major strengthening force for the future (Hosseini & Abolhasani, 2016, p. 19-20).

In the document outlining Russia's foreign policy strategy, approved and published by the country's president on March 31, 2023, efforts have been made to align the new concept of Russia's foreign policy with modern realities, and it has been referred to as the new doctrine of foreign policy. In this document, emphasis is placed on the development of comprehensive and reliable cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran as a priority group. Russians have four strategic national documents: 1- Foreign Policy Strategy Document 2- Russian Military Doctrine 3- Russian National Security Strategy 4- Russian Maritime Doctrine, and their combination will provide a better and more accurate outlook on Russia and the future. However, the document on Russia's foreign policy strategy also has significant dimensions and importance (IRNA, May 26, 2023). According to the new foreign policy document, Russia intends to focus on developing cooperation with Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria (Euronews, March 31, 2023). The new regional orientations and the removal of the West from Russia's foreign relations, influenced by the Ukraine war, the West's confrontation, and Russia's need for cooperation with independent governments worldwide (Karami, Institute for Iranian and Asian Studies, April 2, 2023).

2. The factors influencing the elevation of Iran's position in Putin's Eurasian doctrine can be outlined as follows:

2-1. Iran's position in the political organization and institution-building of Russia in Eurasia: In the 2008 document known as the concept of Russia's foreign policy, this country has been mentioned as one of the influential centers in the modern world (Divsalar, 2010, p. 63). This perception of Russia's role

on the global stage, especially during Putin's leadership and the post-Soviet political and social crises, has consistently been a fixed component in the official and unofficial statements and positions of Russian authorities. Essentially, the philosophy of great power plays a significant role in shaping Russia's foreign policy in the post-Soviet era, and its importance has been steadily increasing. This philosophy is clearly reflected in all layers of Putin's contemporary foreign policy. However, Russia's leadership and policy-making apparatus seek to regain their great power status not through confrontation, but by interacting and cooperating with other global powers within the existing international system (Nouri, 2010, p. 18). Consequently, Russia, both within and beyond the former Soviet Union, has endeavored to independently and collectively institutionalize its power within the international system. The formation of the Eurasian Union as the first example and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as the second example have been instrumental in organizing and institutionalizing Russia. In this context, Iran, as a regionally influential power, has acquired a unique position in Putin's Eurasian doctrine. Understanding Eurasianism brings Iran and Russia closer in terms of polarization within the international system. Eurasia is emerging as a center of power in the evolving global system. This perspective on polarization in the international system must be juxtaposed with another element in conjunction with power institutions. Russia's view of cooperation with Iran, overall, leans significantly in a positive direction. While, due to the logic of power and pragmatic Russian policies, it cannot be asserted with certainty that Russia aggressively seeks Iran's accession to institutions. Nevertheless, Russia's

perspective on Iran's presence in the organization and institutionalization of Russia in Eurasia and East Asia, influenced by Putin's Eurasian doctrine and the Middle East developments after the Islamic Awakening (The Arab Spring) in the late 2010s, has improved compared to the past. In 2018, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, representing Iran, met with Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, announcing the signing of a free trade agreement between Iran and Eurasian countries. Iran became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2021, having been an observer member before. Russia, through intervention in Syria and coalition with Iran and Iraq, has strengthened its position as a major power in the Middle East and international relations, becoming a key player in the region's developments (Koolaei and Soltani nejad, 2016, p. 122).

2-2. The potentials of Iran to confront the hegemonic goals of the United States:

This issue, alongside the various foundations of the two countries in the discourse of power in the international system, is influenced by their collaborations regarding the polarization of power in the world. Their common denominator is opposition to the unipolar and uniaxial system (Mohammadi & Javedani Moghadam, 2019, p. 11). Iran lacks the capability to counteract Western aggressive tensions, especially those of the United States, aimed at expanding its presence and influence in various geographical areas, including its own borders. For this reason, Iran strives to manage and restrict Western influence in its vicinity through various strategies, maximizing its interests in these actions and reactions.

In this context, Russia, understanding Iran's potential to restrain America's regional

influence, views Iran as a country with which developing relations could have various benefits. The developments in the Middle East after the Islamic Awakening (The Arab Spring) and the failure of Russia's appeasement policy with the West in Libya, particularly the intensification of ISIS power in Iraq and Syria, led Russia to enhance military cooperation with Iran and adopt a more expansive and interventionist foreign policy in Syria in 2015 to safeguard its national interests. This marked Russia's first military intervention beyond its exclusive zone of interests, altering the equations in the Syrian crisis (Zolfaghari & Haji Yousefi, 2017). Additionally, the military cooperation agreement between Iran and Russia in 2015 outlined the framework for their bilateral defense relations, leading to significant actions in defense and military relations, including the delivery of the S-300 missile system to Iran.

The delivery of the S-300 missile system to Iran symbolized mutual trust between the two countries in the realm of defense cooperation and demonstrated that Russia, understanding Iran's potential in confronting America's hegemony in the region, aimed to expand relations beyond limited cooperation in Syria, striving to enhance relationships in regional and international matters (Sanaei, 2019). The security relations between Iran and Russia now extend far beyond military cooperation in Syria, encompassing a wide range of intelligence and armament collaborations to the coordination of regional security policies since 2014. Security convergence has been the driving force behind Iran and Russia's relations from 2014 to the present.

2-3. The common perception of emerging security threats as a converging factor in the light of Putin's Eurasianist doctrine:

Common political, economic, and security threats between Iran and Russia in recent years have created a foundation for mutual understanding of security. The expansion of Salafi and terrorist movements, manifested by new non-state actors, contributes to this shared security understanding. The joint actions of both countries in the Syrian crisis serve as a pivotal point for their collaboration in addressing mutual security threats. This is emphasized even in Russia's latest foreign policy document, highlighting Russia's pursuit of comprehensive cooperation with Iran or the necessity of completing collaboration mechanisms among the Caspian Sea littoral countries based on consensus and collective decisions (Karami, 2018, p. 93). Russian analysts perceive proximity to Iran as increasing Western security costs, viewing Russia's alignment with anti-Western and principled countries as forcing the West to allocate more resources to deterrence in the south (Koolaei, 2004, p. 104).

Iran, in its Eurasianist approach, strategically and militarily plays a simultaneous role in the Near East, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the governments of the Caspian Sea region. All countries in this region share commonalities with Iran, making close relations with Iran integral to resolving both internal and external regional issues. These issues include identity, religious, military, economic, migration-related problems, negative impacts of drug trade, terrorism, and separatist tendencies. Considering Iran's ancient history in the region, spanning over thousands of years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has the potential to be an influential player in ensuring

security in the region (Koochakzadeh and Goodarzi, 2019, p. 254).

2-4. Cooperation with Iran as a Regional Hegemon:

The rise of Iran as a regional hegemon in Western Asia enhances its position in the power equations of the region. Iran's regional influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Yemen, demonstrated through its penetration, indicates Iran's prominent status in Western Asia. The collaboration between Iran and Russia in Syria has been defined as a new model, in which Russia has been successful. These developments suggest that Russia has reached or is reaching a point where it can define a new model of cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries. Furthermore, this collaboration can not only withstand pressure from the United States and the West but also strengthen Russia economically, politically, socially, and militarily. Currently, it seems that Putin is adopting and advancing this model (Fouladi, Jooybari, & Jamshidi Rad, 2019, p. 192).

2-5. Strategic Cooperation with Iran, such as the North-South Corridor, providing Russia access to the Persian Gulf and, consequently, the Indian subcontinent: The advantages of transporting goods through this corridor include reducing transportation costs and customs, decreasing the shelf life of containers, fast delivery of goods, accelerating banking operations, and enhancing commercial credibility.

2-6. Geopolitical Arena: Russian policy-makers consider Iran as a crucial geopolitical ally.

2-7. Geographical Factor: Despite the separation resulting from the emergence of new republics, Iran and Russia, as blue neighbors in Central Asia and the Caucasus, share a set of interests. The consequences of changes in this region continue to connect the national security of both countries, maintaining the national security of Iran and Russia interconnected. Particularly, the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russian foreign policy is of special importance (Karami, 2009, p. 66).

2-8. Garnering Iran's support for Russian policies or, at the very least, Iran not opposing Russia's policies in the region, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus: This is particularly important for Russia in Northern Caucasus and Chechnya (Ghahramanpour, 2008, p. 265) as it has not condemned Russia's operations in these regions, interpreting the conflicts as a Christian-Russian war against Islamic Chechnya (Zadokhin, 2005, p. 291).

2-9. Defense of Moscow against hostile resolutions in the Organization of Islamic Conference and agreement with Russia's positions on Afghanistan and Iraq in the United Nations (Erleff & Vinnikov, 2005, p. 234).

2-10. Russia's interest in selling weapons to Iran:

The most important military items Iran imports from Russia include Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines, MiG and Sukhoi fighter aircraft, Il-76 transport planes, T-72 and T-90 tanks, various missile launchers, long-range missiles, SAM and Igla missiles. Training Iranian students in Russian military and technical centers is also among these interests (Karami, 2009, p.154) The delivery of the S-300 missile system, which entered Iran with Putin's approval on April 12, 2016, is part of these benefits (Karami, 2009, p. 154; Katz, 2016, p. 3).

2-11. Russian support for Iran in the United Nations Security Council:

After the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in response to Iran's missile tests, the Zionist regime and the United States expressed concerns and labeled it a violation of Security Council Resolution 2231. Following these statements, the United States requested an extraordinary meeting of the UN Security Council. However, Russia declared that Iran's missile tests do not violate the UN resolution. On the other hand, Russian diplomats, including Lavrov, characterized reactions to Iran's missile program as purely political and aimed at diverting global public opinion (Katz, 2012, pp. 54-57).

3-The objectives of the Russians in cooperating with Iran

The most important goals that the Russians pursue in cooperation with Iran can be mentioned as follows:

1. Nuclear cooperation with Iran increases Russia's bargaining power against the United States, and this country has repeatedly benefited from this strategy.
2. Russians favor maintaining the current multipolar system and are opposed to any unilateralism by the United States. They share common concerns with Iran in this regard. Therefore, they use Iran's anti-American policies to counteract U.S. unilateralism in the region and global issues.
3. Iran provides a good market for the sale of peaceful nuclear technology and Russian arms.
4. Russia faces economic challenges and a shortage of foreign exchange reserves. Nuclear cooperation with Iran is a profitable deal for Russia.
5. A nuclear renaissance has emerged in most third-world countries today, and many countries seek nuclear technology and nuclear power plants. Cooperation with Iran can serve as a good model for Russia's nuclear trade with other countries.
6. Russian collaboration with Iran, as a powerful country in the region and with influence in the Islamic world and Muslim countries, elevates Russia's position in the sensitive and crucial Middle East region. This elevation of status leads to the expansion of Russia's influence in the energy-rich Middle East as the pulsating heart of the industrialized world.
7. The Iranian nuclear issue is important for Russia, as it seeks to gain points from both the West and Iran.

8. Russia strives to regain its past power and position in the international system. Through nuclear cooperation with Iran and internationalizing the Iranian issue, Russia presents itself more prominently on the global stage and in managing international affairs.

9. Maintaining and developing relations with Tehran can secure Russia's interests in the Middle East and even in the surrounding areas of the Caspian Sea, where, due to cultural and historical affiliations, Iran's sphere of influence is considered extensive. Therefore, by utilizing Iran's potential and influence, Russia can address potential crises in Central Asia and the Caucasus and its Muslim-majority southern regions.

10. Like North Korea, Russia aims to prevent Iran from mastering indigenous nuclear technology.

11. Russia can benefit from Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons because it will strengthen nuclear activities in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, leading to increased instability in the Middle East. As a major oil exporter, Russia stands to gain from higher oil prices resulting from the region's instability.

12. Preventing any military attack and regime change in Tehran by shifting the nuclear issue from the military phase to sanctions and diplomacy.

13. Creating obstacles to the establishment of new energy routes such as the Nabucco pipeline.

14. Preventing the European Union from reducing its dependence on Russian energy.

15. The presence of oil and other valuable mineral resources in the region (Sanaei & Karami, 2008, p. 50)

16. Confronting sanctions: Both Russia and Iran have been subjected to sanctions by Western countries and the United States. Therefore, they can help each other bypass sanctions and reduce the effectiveness of sanctions.

17. Allocating billions of dollars in credits and loans from Russia to Iran (Fouladi, Jooybari & Jamshidi rad, 2019, p. 209).

18. Proximity to Iran for penetration into the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Islamic countries (Rezazadeh, 2006, p. 8)

19. Cultural cooperation between the two countries, including the establishment and strengthening of dozens of linguistics and Iranology centers in Russia, consular facilities for tourists, cooperation between universities, and media collaboration between the two countries (Safari, 2005, p. 156)

4- Variables influencing the nuclear relations between Iran and Russia:

1- Nuclear cooperation with Iran for the acquisition of abundant economic benefits and the assertion of Russia's position in international politics: The Russians are striving to regain their past power and position in the international system. Through nuclear cooperation with Iran and the internationalization of the Iranian nuclear issue, they present themselves more prominently on the global stage and in the management of international affairs.

2- Utilizing Iran as a strategic lever and a significant tool in Russia's pragmatic diplomacy towards the United States and the West (Ghahramanpour, 2008, p. 267). Russia, in dealing

with the Iranian nuclear dossier, attempted to avoid pointless confrontations with the United States. Moscow effectively preserved Russia's interests in Tehran and Washington through its diplomatic skills. Employing a dual policy, on one hand, emphasizing Iran's overall lack of nuclear weapons with Washington, gaining points in various areas with the United States, and on the other hand, emphasizing negotiations with Tehran, economic, political, and military cooperation, securing its benefits from Iran.

3- Utilizing Iran's demands for the acquisition of advanced technologies in light of America's sanctions and, in general, the West.

4- Nowadays, a nuclear awakening has occurred in most third-world countries, and most nations seek nuclear technology and nuclear power plants. Collaboration with Iran can serve as a good model for Russian nuclear trade with other countries.

5- Russia, like North Korea, aims to prevent nuclear technology in Iran from becoming widespread and indigenous (Gheriyagh Zandi, 2007, p. 225).

6- Russia can benefit from Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons because it would lead to the strengthening of nuclear activities in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, resulting in increased instability in the Middle East, raising oil prices, which is advantageous for Russia as a major oil exporter (Percovich, 2008, p. 182).

7- From Russia's perspective, the Iranian nuclear market is a scene of strategic competition, and Russia cannot easily relinquish it. Furthermore, Russia is always engaged in intense competition with the West, and for this reason, it will never fully let go of Iran (Jafari

and Mirjalali, 2010, p. 13). Economic analysis of Russia's positions on nuclear cooperation with Iran and the examination of trade exchanges with Russia indicate that Russia has solidified its position as a trading partner with Iran since 2000 (Balsini and Azari, 2008, pp. 47-50).

Accurate statistics on Russia's capital from its covert nuclear program are confidential, but rough estimates suggest around 800 million to one billion dollars. This amount has greatly assisted Russia's nuclear industry and other sectors affected by the economic upheaval in the early '90s due to the Soviet dissolution (Golshanpajoo, 2005, p. 228). Russia, therefore, has a significant need for Iran's capital.

Russia, with a pragmatic approach, has shown interest in the development of mutually beneficial economic and trade relations and strengthening its position in Iran's nuclear market, reaping substantial benefits from these relationships (Moradi, 2006). Russia has played a substantial role in the Iranian nuclear issue, defending its interests in Iran and participating most actively in nuclear programs, power plant construction, and their follow-up. Although somewhat ambiguous, Iran is considered Russia's primary hope among major nations (Moghadam far, 2009). The predominant assumption, especially among Iranian public opinion and analysts, is that Russia views Iran as a tool in its interaction and confrontation with the United States, taking advantage of the existing tension between Iran and the West for its benefit (Shoori, 2009, pp. 60-69).

8-The underlying structure of the former Soviet Union and its defense or information system has remained intact with a change of name

(Hartman, 2011, p. 125). The intelligence apparatus of this country, known as the Federal Security Service, ranks among the top 9 spy organizations globally. The Russian intelligence apparatus played a significant role in uncovering the espionage activities of Alireza Akbari for England, thereby preventing the leakage of more nuclear information from Iran. Akbari, the former deputy defense minister and advisor to the Supreme National Security Council, was an English spy. Iran, with the assistance of Russia, managed to discover this fact. After 15 years, in 2019, with the help of Russian intelligence authorities, Iran became aware of Akbari's clandestine role in leaking information, revealing that he was the one exposing the underground nuclear site of Iran in the mountains around Tehran (Fordow site). Alireza Akbari, a 62-year-old Iranian-British citizen, was executed in January 2022 on charges of espionage, according to the Revolutionary Court's verdict. Despite denying all charges during both detentions in 2008 and 2019, he had provided valuable information about Iran's nuclear and military plans to Britain. Akbari began revealing Iran's nuclear secrets to British intelligence in 2004. He played a significant role, even after leaving Iran and residing in Britain, in maintaining credibility for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Akbari's close relationship with key Western embassies in Tehran was established in 2004. In response to increasing doubts from Zionist and Western regimes about Iran's secret efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, Akbari was tasked by the Islamic Republic to establish contact with key embassies in Tehran and convince them that Iran's nuclear program was peaceful. And for this reason, he continuously met with the ambassadors of Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia. The back-and-forth is said to have

eventually led to his agreeing to spy for Britain. He disclosed the identity and activities of more than a hundred government officials, including Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, to the spy services. Mr. Fakhrizadeh was assassinated by Israel in 2020. Apparently, England provided information to Israel and the United States. Mr. Akbari, who suffered a heart attack in London in 2010, took the opportunity to reside in Britain, obtained British citizenship, and entered the private sector, establishing companies in Austria, Spain, and Britain. However, in 2019, he was summoned to Iran for urgent consultations on a nuclear and defense matter, detained, and after three years, his identity was revealed as a spy and was executed in prison. According to a senior Iranian diplomat and government consultant, in official meetings, he would say that Iran must acquire nuclear weapons. Mr. Foad Izadi, a political analyst, stated: "He was an extraordinary ambitious person, a skilled analyst with superior writing and speaking skills, and a trusted individual for everyone." The Iranian government claims: Mr. Akbari has betrayed the country and exposed state secrets in exchange for money. MI6 has paid nearly two million pounds to Akbari. According to his brother, Akbari was detained by the Ministry of Intelligence. Britain condemned Akbari's execution, recalled its ambassador for a short period, and imposed new sanctions against Iran (Rooydad24, Published: April 30, 2023, News Code: 336495).

Conclusion:

The discourses and foreign policy doctrines of countries, formulated in line with their national interests, play a significant role in

shaping the foreign policies of nations. In Putin's Eurasian doctrine, Russia and Iran converge as Eurasian heartlands in opposition to the Atlantic alliance, complementing each other geopolitically. In this purely geostrategic approach, its effective management can even challenge the Atlantic alliance in the global geopolitical system. On one side, Russia is considered a strategic stronghold for Iran against the West, and on the other side, Iran represents the United States' largest weakness, the traditional rival of Russia in global competition. Accordingly, strengthening Eurasianism in Russia will also enhance Iran's position with Moscow. The increasing convergence between Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran on regional issues and crises, such as the deployment of Russian planes and the use of the airbase in Hamedan to bomb ISIS in Russia, Iran providing drones to Russia, and Russia using Iranian drones in the conflict with Ukraine, as well as supporting Hamas against the Zionist regime's occupation, are examples of this growing convergence. Previously, Iran and Russia had collaborated in some regional crises, such as the civil war in Tajikistan and the Afghan crisis. The two countries have also participated in combating terrorism in Iraq and mediating in the political crisis in Qatar. Their collaboration extends to Eurasian international organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, shaping a new alignment for reshaping the order in West Asia. Iran's influence in countries like Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, alongside non-state actors and proxy groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Ansar Allah in Yemen, and Hamas in Palestine, plays a decisive role in the equations of West Asia. Today, Russia and Iran share a common ideological discourse in

opposing Western values. Additionally, Iran has adopted a pragmatic policy to rely more on Russia in order to alleviate the pressure from the United States and ensure its survival. This situation has brought the security sectors of Iran and Russia closer. In evaluating the developments in Iran-Russia relations, it should be noted that in recent years, after the clear American approach to reduce its presence in the Middle East and manage the region's issues through regional coalitions, both countries have shown more inclination to strengthen bilateral cooperation. However, regarding Russia, it should be mentioned that after the start of the Ukraine war and under the influence of pressure resulting from Western sanctions, this country has found more motivation to approach Iran to meet some of its needs. Also, the regional competition of this country with the United States in Syria has placed it alongside Iran. On the other hand, due to its perpetual hostility with the United States, Iran has seen the solution in strengthening security cooperation with Russia. Both governments assume that the liberal order is in decline and are striving to create a new pole in the international system to confront the Western liberal order. Therefore, influenced by regional and global security developments, the nature of Russia and Iran's collaboration is more security-oriented, and the Iranian nuclear issue also has a security dimension.

The Islamic Republic of Iran benefits from the advantages of geo-strategic, geo-economic, geo-political, and geo-cultural factors. Russia seeks increased cooperation with Iran on regional and global levels, expanding collaborations based on geo-atomic and hydro-politic foundations. Putin's Eurasian discourse has led to closer ties between Russia and Iran in military, security, informational, political,

economic, and cultural domains. Russia's red line in relations with Iran closely relates to Iran's proximity to the West and the United States, as well as Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Both countries hold cards for mutual strategic engagements, such as Moscow's political support for Iran's ownership of the three Iranian islands to the detriment of the United Arab Emirates and the sale of Iranian gas to Western Europe, which is Russia's adversary. However, the outcomes resulting from these mutual cards are again shaping the equation in favor of expanding Iran-Russia relations. As

long as Putin and his Eurasian policies dominate Russian foreign policy, Russians cannot afford to lose Iran or sacrifice it for their own policies. In the current circumstances, Russia has taken irreversible steps, and the Islamic Republic of Iran can capitalize on Russia's opposition to American unilateralism and its confrontation with the West. By collaborating with Russia in the nuclear field, Iran can make significant progress, elevating its position in the global power structure and playing a more influential role in regional transformations, especially in West Asia and globally.

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