

NEW POLITICAL GROWTH POINTS FOR STRATEGIC COOPERATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND IRAN: SHARING EXPERIENCE OR STRENGTHENING TRUST?

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Abstract

The article analyzes new political dimensions of Russian-Iranian relations, which are in many ways a unique example of interstate cooperation, which is due to the peculiarities of the international political situation and the interests of the two states. As the most influential states of the Caspian region and having long-term experience of regional interstate cooperation, Russia and Iran undoubtedly lay claim to regional leadership. This determines a fairly extensive set of political disagreements that exist between the two countries. Sometimes these disagreements give rise to an active political struggle, which often involves other Caspian states. The economic interests of the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran also do not always allow the possibility of coordination on a parity basis. An example here is the long-standing discussion about the status of the Caspian Sea and the division of its oil-bearing shelf, as well as the competition between different routes of export oil pipelines. Attention is drawn to the fact that Russia and Iran, being, based on the realities of the geographical and international political position, regional states-competitors, on the world stage often show themselves as allies, developing coordinated approaches to key international problems. In this situation, the general level of relations between the two states is subject to sharp changes, since interactions include periods of exacerbation of bilateral contradictions and periods of close interaction.

Keywords: *Russian-Iranian relations, strategic cooperation, regional leadership, political dimensions, counterstruggle.*

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Introduction

The history of relations between Russia and Iran spans several centuries, but in the current stage, the development of these relations has acquired strategic significance, having expanded from the bilateral level to the regional and extra-regional levels. Geopolitical peculiarities and the potential for developing economic, political, cultural, and military relations provide fertile ground for Russian-Iranian cooperation in various areas. Russia and Iran are capable of exerting significant influence on developments in the South Caucasus, the Middle East, and the Caspian Sea. Advocating for their interests by both countries is a prerequisite for their significant influence on security in several regions, even altering the balance of power. Since the start of the Special Military Operation in Ukraine in 2022, which escalated into a large-scale war between Russia and Ukraine¹, relations between Iran and Russia have undergone changes, but they can generally still be described as cooperation or, at times, positive competition. The reluctance of Iran and Russia to accept Western, and particularly U.S., dominance in international relations and the desire to build a multipolar world architecture, as well as strengthen other centers of power to counterbalance unilateral hegemony, has become one of the points of contact in the foreign policies of these two countries.

Russia's efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, its attempts to alleviate international pressure on Iran, and, finally, its role in negotiating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)² have marked a significant step in the history of bilateral relations. Ties between the two countries, influenced by domestic and, more significantly, external factors, have become more dynamic, making their study particularly relevant in light of current international challenges.

The historical basis of Russian-Iranian relations can be described as non-conflict and good-neighborly. It is enough to note that after the Russian-Persian wars of 1804-1813 and 1826-1828, Iran and Russia did not go to war again for the next two hundred years, which in itself characterizes the political culture of their relations (Kia 2023). Even the complications and potential scenarios of conflict that emerged during the two world wars did not lead to military action. And there were exacerbations and crisis situations. In the general history, the two countries have experienced different stages: wars, rapprochement and conflict situations, including the tragic murder of the prominent Russian poet and diplomat Alexander Griboyedov in Tehran. It is worth noting that the Iranian crisis of 1946 and the negative positions of the Shah regime towards the foreign policy initiatives of the USSR during the Cold War were also not favorable in geopolitical terms. However, the three hundred years of common Russian-Iranian political interests around the Caspian Sea predetermined the closeness of Russia and Iran.

¹ UN. 2022. "Russian Federation Announces 'Special Military Operation' in Ukraine as Security Council Meets in Eleventh-Hour Effort to Avoid Full-Scale Conflict." February 23, 2022. Accessed May 31, 2025. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14803.doc.htm>; U.S. Department of War. 2025. Russian War in Ukraine. May 31, 2025. <https://www.war.gov/Spotlights/Support-for-Ukraine/Timeline/>.

² The official website of the Council of the EU and the European Council. Iran's nuclear agreement. Accessed May 31, 2025. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/jcpoa-iran-restrictive-measures/>.

It is concluded that, despite the differences in their political, social and economic systems, there are no contradictions between Iran and Russia³ that would create obstacles to the development of active cooperation in the region. Neither Iran nor Russia is interested in destabilizing the military-political situation in the strategically important regions of the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The interests of both countries are equally opposed to the growing interference of the West, particularly the U.S., in the affairs of states in these regions. NATO expansion poses a direct threat to the national interests and security of both Iran and Russia. Both countries were united in their commitment to maintaining the Caspian Sea as a region of peace, friendship, and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The increased interest in the Caspian Sea is determined by its strategic location between Europe and Asia, its large oil and gas reserves, convenient transportation routes, and valuable sturgeon species. The interests of Russia and Iran in the Caspian region largely coincide. Certainly, some issues remain in Iranian-Russian bilateral relations at the regional level, particularly, as noted above, disagreements over the final determination of the legal status of the Caspian Sea. Initially, Iran aligned itself with Russia in favor of the joint use of the Caspian's water and mineral resources (Kiani 2021). However, other views subsequently prevailed in Iran, and Iran agreed with the Azerbaijani approach aimed at dividing the sea into sectors of equal size. Furthermore, Iran seeks to maximize the geographic advantages of its coastline. Regarding military activity in the Caspian Sea, Iran supports Russia's formulation of establishing an equal balance of arms and a control system for all, as well as the principle of inadmissibility of the presence of third-party forces in the Caspian Sea, including in the airspace over the sea.

Therefore, it is an important and common achievement that relations between the two countries are now not only constructive, but also contribute to the development of much larger projects that shape the image of not only the region, but also the entire world. Of course, the eastern turn of Russian policy should not be perceived as a refusal to engage with its Western neighbors. After all, now Russia is at war, which will primarily determine the future of Europe and the new world order. A global U.S.-Russian agreement is also possible, which could lead to a New Yalta. In any case, Russian-Iranian strategic cooperation is an important component of the new world order, whatever it may be. However, the main task of the Russian political elite in the coming years is to restore Russia to its true historical significance, to make it a pole and a bridge connecting the world, a crossroads where East meets West, and North meets South.

According to Western experts, the current escalation of the confrontation between Iran, the U.S. and Israel is also a factor contributing to the Russian-Iranian rapprochement. The U.S. no longer hides that it is globally preparing to revive the doctrine of maximum pressure on Iran, which could lead to real losses for its economy. If this happens, the chances of starting a huge social instability inside Iran will increase significantly, and integration into Russian-centric structures can neutralize this danger (Tazmini 2021).

³ The MFA of the RF. 2025. the Islamic Republic of Iran. Accessed May 31, 2025. <https://mid.ru/en/maps/ir/>.

On January 17, 2025, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed the Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran⁴, which is a new historical turning point (The MFA of the RF 2025). What opportunities will the new cooperation agreement give to the two countries? This is indeed a very important fundamental document that can condition Russian-Iranian cooperation in the coming years and even decades. We are talking about a new interstate agreement, a comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. Is this also about the final formation of a new geopolitical Moscow-Tehran axis, which may have opportunities for expansion?

The challenge of building relationships in a complex geopolitical environment

Iran and Russia face the challenge of building their relations in a fundamentally new and complex geopolitical environment. Valuable experience has been accumulated through joint work in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and the implementation of economic projects, including on a regional scale. Iran's advantageous geographic location at the intersection of strategically important trade and transport routes allowed it to exploit this factor to extract necessary benefits, primarily in the economic sphere. Capitalizing on its geopolitical advantage, Iran sought to become an active participant in various interstate and interregional associations and to initiate processes occurring in several regions (Aziz 2025). By building its political and diplomatic potential, Iran aimed to enhance its role in the international arena.

The two countries are rivals for spheres of influence in their relations with each other. The competition between Russia, Türkiye and Iran for control over energy export flows is one of the important factors for understanding the nature of international relations in the region. The state of Russian-Iranian relations cannot be viewed outside the context of global international relations and disconnected from the political, economic and military situations in the region (Tyukaeva 2024). Russia is one of the few countries that the Islamic Republic of Iran is actively trying to approach today. However, there are a number of problems that are not always easily resolved. In particular, Moscow can in no way be interested in Tehran gaining access to nuclear weapons. It is obvious that any Iranian government, regardless of its ideological orientation, will not be free from the idea of creating nuclear weapons. It is necessary to take into account the possibility that in the event of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, its policy may become more radical. In this context, when developing and implementing a policy towards Iran, Russia is forced to take into account the West, especially the U.S. Iran, in turn, claims to have a leading role in the Middle East (Andersen 2023, 81-86).

Despite some contradictions in the positions of the two countries, Iran is of invaluable importance for Russia in the light of modern geopolitical realities. Iran is a large Islamic state with a population of more than 70 million, large reserves of

⁴ Official Website of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. 2025. "Full text of Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty." October 17, 2025. Accessed October 19, 2025. <https://president.ir/en/156874>.

hydrocarbon resources and an independent political player in the international arena. It occupies a strategic position with respect to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Arab world. In the south, Iran has access to the strategically important Persian and Oman Gulfs, as well as to the world's most important transport arteries, and in the north, Iran controls the southern part of the Caspian Sea (Tyukaeva 2024).

The South Caucasus states bordering Iran, as well as Turkmenistan, are regions of Russia's post-Soviet priority interests. Iran is among the world's top five natural gas and oil reserves, and also has reserves of iron ore, coal, copper, chromium, lead, and other minerals. These make Iran a regional partner and competitor of Russia (Mahmoudian 2023). Before the collapse of the USSR, the Iranian leadership viewed Russia primarily as an ideological adversary and spared no effort to criticize it. The collapse of the USSR and the changes taking place in the world forced the Iranian military-political leadership to reconsider its political vector and view Russia as a strategic ally. Currently, Tehran's policy in Central Asia and the South Caucasus largely corresponds to Russia's national interests. Moreover, Iran is important for Russian interests, as this country is a serious obstacle to NATO's course of creating buffer and sanitary zones in the southern direction. Like Russia, Iran is also a strategic opponent of Euro-Atlantic global expansionism. Tehran is not interested in strengthening the positions of states hostile to it in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. In this context, it can be argued that Iran acts as a strategic ally of Russia in the Caspian-Caucasian geopolitical regions, where fierce geopolitical competition for new transport corridors and trade flows is developing. It can be argued that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a state that is practically able to maintain its self-sufficiency and, under conditions of unprecedented long-term pressure, ensures control over its own natural resources, opposing the U.S. and its allies. Russian-Iranian relations cover the areas of railway, automobile and maritime communications, gas and oil transportation, cooperation in the Caspian Sea, oil production, fishing, military-technical cooperation, the construction of a nuclear power plant in Bushehr, etc.

Current trends in Russian-Iranian rapprochement

After the 1979 Revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran, due to well-known events and the circumstances of the development of complex, hostile relations with the U.S., became the leading anti-Western country in the South Asian and Middle Eastern regions, for which it has been subject to sanctions for more than forty years.

Russia also appeared on the anti-Western platform when President Putin adopted a policy of tough counteraction to the Collective West's practice of reducing Russia's spheres of influence through color revolutions in the post-Soviet space. The peak of this policy was the current Ukrainian war that began in February 2022 and the application of anti-Russian sanctions on an unprecedented scale. In response to the Western campaign to isolate Moscow, the Russian authorities are seeking to get closer to traditionally anti-Western countries. Due to these realities and dictated by objective reasons, the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran have entered into a continuous process of rapprochement and cooperation in interstate relations over the past ten years. The rapprochement of the two countries, caused by anti-Russian and anti-Iranian sanctions, will obviously continue. Some areas, such as military-technical

cooperation, seem promising. Iran can partially help the Russian economy withstand sanctions. Relations between Russia and Iran, which have been developing slowly but surely in recent years, entered a period of rapid development after the outbreak of the Ukrainian war. In response to Western sanctions, Moscow began to look for alternative partners, including those to circumvent trade restrictions, and Iran turned out to be one of the most promising of them (Andersen 2023).

The most sensational was Russia's use of Iranian drones against Ukraine, but the parties' ambitions are not limited to this, new joint projects are emerging in various fields, from gas production to aircraft production. Extensive plans for Russian-Iranian cooperation are worrying the Washington/Brussels tandem. Western think tanks are of the opinion that Iran is unlikely to be able to seriously help the Russian economy bypass sanctions, in addition, they predict domestic political crises that may make it difficult to implement any agreements with the Iranian leadership. However, the reality is that the Islamic Republic of Iran, as one of the key players in the Middle East, has a huge influence on a number of processes taking place in world politics. Developing effective and cheap military technologies and conducting successful research in the field of peaceful atomic energy, Tehran has been following its own path for 45 years, developing strategic partnerships with allies and not allowing its adversaries to dictate their will.

Iran has always been an important player in the South Caucasus, which is why the topic is extremely relevant for Armenian political science, because the development of Russian-Iranian cooperation has a significant impact on South Caucasian political processes. The recent changes in Transcaucasia have allowed Iran to play a more active role in this region. It is necessary to find answers to several important questions. Can Russia lose its positions in this region as a result of Iran's activation and to what extent does Russia participate in the projects developed by Iran in Transcaucasia?

We see that the Iranian side is ready and cooperates with Russia in this region. Moscow and Tehran have similar positions in the sense that all contradictions, all conflicts in this region should be resolved through peaceful political and diplomatic efforts and by the countries of the region themselves, without the intervention of external forces. Both sides are concerned about the attempts of Western countries to take advantage of the changes in Armenia's foreign policy positions. Priority is given to the 3+3 regional-consultative platform⁵ created for the South Caucasus, which includes Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia and their three neighbors - Russia, Türkiye and Iran. This concerns, in particular, practical cooperation projects: economy, energy, trade, transport, information and communication technologies, natural resources, humanitarian sphere, education, culture, tourism. Of particular importance in strategic cooperation is the project of the North-South International Transport Corridor. As we know, many Persian Gulf countries are also interested in it, which was highlighted during Putin's visit to Tehran in 2022. And in May 2023, an intergovernmental agreement was signed on the completion of the last missing section of the Rasht-Astara railway. Another project under negotiation is the creation of the Russia-Transcaucasia-

⁵ MFA of the RA. 2024. "Joint Communiqué of the Third Meeting of the "3+3" Regional Cooperation Platform." October 18, 2024. Accessed October 19, 2025. https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2024/10/18/Armenia_3+3/12901.

Iran energy bridge, which involves the exchange and transportation of electricity between Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran during peak load periods.

Negotiations and development of relations from 2022 to 2024

Studying the course of relations between Russia and Iran over the past two years, it can be stated that they have experienced an upswing. Dialogue at the highest level has continued regularly, the exchange of delegations has increased in all areas. As a result, 2022 was an unprecedented year in terms of the number of meetings between high-ranking Russian officials and Iranian counterparts. During the specified period, Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, several heads of Russian regions and President Putin himself visited Tehran. A trilateral summit on the Syrian settlement was held in Tehran in the Astana format. In addition, the Russian head of state held separate bilateral meetings with the leaders of Iran and Türkiye, as well as with Iran's Supreme and Spiritual Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. One of the most important events was the visit of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi to Moscow on December 7, 2023 and his talks with the President Putin. In this sense, one of the important results of the 2023-2024 high-level intergovernmental negotiations was Iran's accession to integration structures in which Russia plays a key role. In the summer of 2023, Iran became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and on January 1, 2024, it joined BRICS. Subsequently, a free trade agreement was signed between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union, and Iran received observer status in the EAEU. Russia's official position is that Iran's accession strengthens the strategic partnership and international standing of these international structures, which, in principle, will lead to a profound transformation of international relations, reflecting the emergence of a more equitable world order. Iran, on the other hand, recognizes the need to reduce Western influence in global affairs.

Intensive Russian-Iranian economic cooperation on international platforms has created an opportunity to include other countries: Afghanistan, Transcaucasia, the Middle East. All this is happening actively, regularly, and, I think, is also beneficial for Armenia-Iran bilateral relations.

The West is responding to the rapid Russian-Iranian rapprochement of the last two years by tightening sanctions, the justification for which is the support provided to Russia on the Ukrainian front. Iran's economy is also suffering after the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 and the so-called 'maximum pressure policy' implemented on Iran by the first Trump administration, affecting the oil, banking, and transport sectors. According to a number of Russian experts, the current sanctions imposed by Western countries due to Iran's alleged support for Russia in Ukraine are fundamentally untrue, have a primarily political effect, and have little impact on Iran's economic performance (World Bank 2025; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank 2024). There are areas where Russia and Iran can compete on the global stage, but we don't see this as anything that could negatively impact our relations. Both countries possess large oil and gas reserves, but this doesn't hinder, but rather facilitates, close cooperation within OPEC and the Gas Exporting

Countries Forum. Russian energy companies are successfully operating in the Iranian market, and last year Russia ranked first in foreign investment in Iran.

The Russian government's activity in Iran has also affected private businesses. In recent months, hundreds of Russian entrepreneurs, who had previously never considered cooperating with Iran, have visited Tehran. As a result, total trade between the two countries, while reaching \$4 billion in 2021, reached \$4.7 billion in 2023, and approximately \$4.8 billion in 2024 (Kozhanov 2023; TASS 2025a). It should also be noted that Western expert centers believe that Iran cannot yet claim the role of savior of the Russian economy from sanctions, and the Iranian direction is unable to compensate for the loss of income due to Western sanctions (Kiani 2021). In their opinion, trade turnover is less than 1% of the total volume of Russian foreign trade, and Iran still has a long way to go to match the level of countries like Türkiye, with which trade amounts to about \$30 billion annually. Researchers in this direction also believe that the implementation of large Russian state projects in Iran will also not be easy. The issue of return on investments is emphasized. Tehran is short of foreign currency and struggles with a budget deficit every year. This has created problems for Moscow in the past. For example, the issue of Iran's debt to Russia for the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant, which in 2021 amounted to at least \$500 million, has not yet been resolved. The development of Russian-Iranian relations is also questioned by those who note the possible deepening of the internal political instability of the two countries, noting the theocracy in Iran and the authoritarian/arbitrary system of government in Russia, which can collapse at any time.

The gas factor in Russian-Iranian interstate relations

The West's policy of pushing Russia out of the global gas market and isolating it, which was implemented by blowing up the gas pipelines passing through the Baltic Sea and stopping gas supplies to Europe via Ukraine from the beginning of 2025, is a potentially good opportunity for gas-exporting countries to fill the vacant spot in the energy market. However, Iran did not have such an opportunity, as in late 2022, Russia and Iran found themselves in a bitter standoff with the West, which was imposing ever-increasing sanctions against them. As a result, the gas factor became a factor of cooperation and rapprochement, rather than competition. Unsurprisingly, Moscow and Tehran shifted sharply toward rapprochement not only in the military sphere but also in the energy sector. The parties signed a memorandum providing for massive Russian investment in Iranian gas projects and have already begun implementing it. Given that Russia and Iran hold the world's first and second-largest gas reserves, many saw this cooperation as a danger of the emergence of a 'global gas cartel'. Of course, sanctions will reduce the profitability of many planned gas projects, and their implementation will face difficulties due to the restrictions imposed on both countries. Future events will reveal the extent to which the gas factor will strengthen the alliance, or whether it will prove situational until relations between Iran and the West change (Keynoush 2022).

Shortly after Russian gas exports to Europe were disrupted by the invasion of Ukraine, Iranian officials admitted that they were considering supplying their gas to the empty European market. In theory, such an initiative seems logical, but in reality,

Tehran's gas competition is unrealistic, because in the short term, gas supplies from Iran to the EU are excluded. The reason is the consistent policy of Western countries. For three decades, Europe and the U.S. have systematically isolated Tehran from participating in major international energy trade and transit projects. Iran's rivals, such as Russia and Qatar, have been much more reliable and promising partners than the anti-Western Islamic Republic. The final stop to the Iranian path was put by U.S. sanctions. They prevented the introduction of liquefied natural gas technologies in Iran and the construction of gas pipelines to Europe. As a result, Tehran has focused on meeting domestic gas needs and small regional exports, mainly to Türkiye and Iraq. There is little chance of lifting sanctions in the foreseeable future, which are tied to the nuclear deal, negotiations on its extension have reached a deadlock (Keynoush 2022, 91-96). In this situation, Russia is a promising partner for the Iranian gas industry, which is why the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and Gazprom signed a memorandum of understanding on investments in 2022. Difficulties arise from the sharp decline in exports to Europe, which is reducing the Russian gas giant's revenue, while large-scale investments in Iranian projects threaten to place an additional burden on Gazprom's budget. Practical steps have been developed for exporting Russian gas to Iran, provided that Iranian gas continues to be supplied to third countries in the same volumes in the future. Ultimately, gas pipelines from Russia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan may be connected in Iran, where, in light of these circumstances, provisions on gas cooperation were also included in the latest agreement.

New Treaty in the Iranian-Russian bilateral and multilateral dimensions

Before the signing of the agreement, relations between Russia and Iran were based on the Treaty on the Fundamentals of Relations and Principles of Cooperation. It was signed back in 2001 and was automatically updated every five years. In recent years, Moscow and Tehran have come to the conclusion that the document does not correspond to new geopolitical realities and a higher level of cooperation. Active work on a new agreement began in January 2022, following a visit to Moscow by former President Ebrahim Raisi, who died on May 19, 2024, in a helicopter crash while returning from negotiations in Azerbaijan. According to Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, the work on the text took about two and a half to three years, and as a result of meetings and discussions, after numerous amendments, an agreement was finally reached.

On January 17, 2025, after negotiations in Moscow, Russian and Iranian Presidents Vladimir Putin and Masoud Pezeshkian signed the Bilateral Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (MFA of the RF 2025). It consists of a preamble and 47 articles⁶. One third of the document is devoted to issues of bilateral military-technical cooperation (exchange of military delegations, reception of warships in each other's ports, training of military personnel, holding joint exercises, and cooperation in

⁶ Official publication of legal acts. 2025. "Treaty on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran dated January 17, 2025 (ratified by Federal Law No. 73-FZ dated April 21, 2025, entered into force on October 2, 2025)." Accessed November 30, 2025. <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202510020001> (In Russian).

combating common threats). In the area of international security, cooperation in the field of arms control and non-proliferation and cooperation in the field of international information security are envisaged. In a separate provision (Article 12), Moscow and Tehran stipulate that they will contribute to strengthening peace and security in the Caspian Sea region, Central Asia, Transcaucasia and the Middle East and will cooperate to prevent the destabilizing presence and intervention of third states in the said regions.

Unlike the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty signed between Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 2024, the agreement with Iran does not contain a clause stipulating that if one party is subjected to an armed attack by any state or states and subsequently finds itself in a state of war, the other party must immediately withdraw. Meanwhile, in Article 3 of the Treaty on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Russia and Iran, Russia and Iran established a different mechanism: if one party is subjected to aggression, the other party must not provide the aggressor with any military or other assistance that would facilitate the continuation of the aggression⁷. Iranian officials have emphasized that the document does not envisage the creation of a defense alliance. According to Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, the treaty includes cooperation in security and defense, but does not aim to create a military alliance (TASS 2025b). Russia and Iran have agreed to cooperate between their intelligence services to strengthen national security and counter common threats, in line with the strategic partnership between the two countries. The document also contains articles on cooperation in such areas as trade and economy, transport, peaceful use of nuclear energy, healthcare, education, space exploration, cultural exchanges, etc.

In their comments, the presidents of both countries emphasized that the interests of both countries will pave the way for further cooperation. In this way, the countries demonstrate that Iran's political leadership and Russia are determined to eliminate minor, insignificant obstacles to trade and economic relations, as Iran's observer status in the Eurasian Economic Union is also of great importance (Aziz 2025; Smagin 2025). After all, even before the signing of the agreement, Russia defended Iran's interests in international organizations, including the UN Security Council. Now such cooperation will also be provided for in an official document on comprehensive cooperation.

The agreement between Russia and Iran, which is in confrontation with the collective West, is characterized by negative aspects in Western centers. They call the new partnership a union of those who do not trust each other, a union of mistrust, considering it a bad sign before Trump's inauguration. According to The Times⁸, before Pezeshkian's upcoming visit to Moscow, Ali Larijani, an adviser to the Supreme Leader of Iran, arrived in Russia for secret meetings, who could discuss Russian assistance in developing Iran's nuclear program and strengthening air defense systems. The publication's intelligence sources suggest that Russia, depending on Iranian missiles and drones, may move forward in supporting Tehran's nuclear ambitions. One

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Times. 2025. "Iran in secret talks with Russia to bolster nuclear ambition." January 12, 2025. Accessed November 30, 2025. <https://www.thetimes.com/world/middle-east/article/iran-russia-nuclear-talks-deal-lfzbdh7z7>.

of the main aspects of Russian-Iranian cooperation is the mutual supply of weapons, which is of most concern to the West. The text of the agreement itself does not provide any specifics on this issue, but a comprehensive agreement would undoubtedly contribute to this.

Russia and Iran are deepening their cooperation in developing drones and missiles, which Russian forces are using in the war against Ukraine. Western countries have officially accused Iran of supplying drones and ballistic missiles to Russia, but Iran denies these supplies. Iran has, however, expressed interest in Russian Su-35 fighter jets and S-400 air defense missile systems. Russia has already supplied Iran with combat trainer aircraft, which are necessary for training pilots to fly modern Russian fighter jets.

Two decades ago, when the conflict between Russia and the West deepened, the thesis of the possibility of the formation of a new Moscow-Tehran geopolitical axis began to circulate. Now the new agreement between Russia and Iran pursues ambitious goals, it is a breakthrough document and will significantly affect global and regional processes. On most foreign policy issues, the positions of Russia and Iran coincide. Russia and Iran will jointly neutralize the interventions of extra-regional forces in the Caspian Sea region, Central Asia, Transcaucasia and the Middle East, which they consider destabilizing.

The launch of the Russian-Iranian gas pipeline project has been announced, potentially transforming the energy markets of neighboring countries. Russia and Iran have agreed on a route for the pipeline through Azerbaijan. Clearly, the Russian-Iranian gas pipeline is of geopolitical rather than economic significance, as it represents a key step in the formation of a multipolar global energy order. The Russian-Iranian gas pipeline is particularly significant in light of ongoing negotiations to build a gas pipeline involving Russia, Iran, Qatar, and Turkmenistan. Amid the implementation of such megaprojects, Armenia is once again finding itself on the sidelines. A potentially advantageous geographic location remains unrealized due to the lack of a clear foreign policy strategy, particularly with regard to the North-South energy transport route, which, as we see, is gradually shifting to Azerbaijan.

The articles of the military-political sphere deserve attention, although a military alliance is not being created, the agreement contains an article on strengthening cooperation in the security and defense sector, according to which if one of the parties is subjected to aggression, the other should not provide any assistance to the aggressor. In this area, Russia and Iran have agreed to cooperate between their intelligence services within the framework of a comprehensive strategic partnership to strengthen national security and counter common threats. Russia and Iran do not allow their territories to be used to support separatist movements that threaten their territorial integrity. It is clear to the West that Iranian-Russian relations, if they develop positively, have and can have stabilizing potential. Conversely, stagnation in bilateral relations, especially their deterioration, could significantly reduce the ability of both Iran and Russia to influence developments in a strategically important region (Kozhanov 2023, 80-85). We believe that the future quality and level of development of bilateral Iranian-Russian relations will directly depend on global international factors, as well as the evolution of political systems and key foreign policy priorities in

both countries. Russia, by defending its own interests, objectively contributes to upholding Iran's vital national interests in foreign policy, economics, and defense. It is also clear that during the period under review, both Iran and Russia sought to pursue transparent, multi-vector foreign policies, both regionally and globally. All these processes confirm the conclusion that Iranian-Russian relations in the 21st century are not superficial or opportunistic, as some experts claim, but rather strategic, as they represent the fundamental interests of both countries. Overall, we can conclude that the development of the entire spectrum of Iranian-Russian interstate relations during the period under review has been on an upward trajectory. Several key factors contributed to this process: the evolution of domestic political systems in both countries, on the one hand, and the rapidly changing international situation with its nearly overlapping threats to the national security of Iran and Russia, on the other.

When improving Iranian-Russian cooperation, it is necessary to consider mutual interests in maintaining stability and non-proliferation in the region, as well as expanding and diversifying economic ties. The development of cooperation between Iran and Russia should not be hindered by the existence of divergent, but not contradictory, interests.

Considering a number of significant factors, such as Iran's involvement in various international processes, the active and high-quality Iranian diplomacy, its advantageous geopolitical position, as well as its colossal natural resources and the most powerful army in the region, it must be recognized that Iran's role in international and interregional relations will remain equally important and significant in the near future. Therefore, it seems necessary and quite logical to build partnerships and strategic relations between Russia and Iran within the framework of mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation, in the context of Russian-Muslim dialogue and the goal of stabilizing the situation in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and upholding Russia's interests in this region. Clearly, Iranian-Russian relations, if they develop positively, have and can have stabilizing potential. Conversely, stagnation in bilateral relations, especially their deterioration, could significantly reduce the ability of both Iran and Russia to influence developments in a strategically important region. We believe that the future quality and level of development of Iranian-Russian bilateral relations will directly depend on global international factors, as well as the evolution of political systems and key foreign policy priorities in both countries. Russia, by defending its own interests, objectively contributes to upholding Iran's vital national interests in foreign policy, economics, and defense. It is also clear that both Iran and Russia have strived to pursue transparent, multi-vector foreign policies, both regionally and globally. In this sense, we can conclude that the development of the entire range of Iranian-Russian interstate relations has been on an upward trajectory. This process was facilitated by several key factors: the evolution of domestic political systems in both countries, on the one hand, and the rapidly changing international situation with its almost identical threats to the national security of Iran and Russia.

The Impact of U.S. Policy on Russian-Iranian Relations

The U.S. is attempting to block Russian-Iranian ties in two areas. The first is primarily military and energy cooperation, including nuclear cooperation. The second is Russian-

Iranian regional and international cooperation in the Caspian region, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. During the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, Moscow's emphasis on relations with Washington in the first years after the collapse of the USSR prompted the Russian leadership to limit arms sales to Iran. The aforementioned Gore-Chernomyrdin Agreement became the legal basis for coordinating Moscow and Washington's foreign policies. According to it, Russia pledged not to enter into new arms deals with Iran and to complete all existing agreements by 1999.

Russia concluded the Gore-Chernomyrdin Agreement in an effort to improve relations with the United States. It should be noted that the U.S. failed to fulfill its obligations to Russia, which led to significant losses, and the suspension of military supplies to Iran had an extremely negative impact on relations between Russia and Iran.

Iran's nuclear program provided another pretext for U.S. interference in Russian-Iranian relations. The first signs of this appeared in the late 1990s. In April 1998, the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy announced that Russia was prepared to provide Iran with an experimental reactor. Washington was concerned that this equipment could be used to enrich uranium to the level needed for nuclear weapons. Russia therefore agreed to delay the delivery of the reactor, which also provoked a negative reaction from Tehran.

In the late 1990s, Iran's missile program became another contentious issue. Following the successful test of the Shahab-3 missile in July 1998 and the subsequent publication of a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Report⁹ on Russian support for the missile's production, as well as Russian cooperation with Iran in the Iranian nuclear program, the U.S. government imposed sanctions on several Russian institutions and organizations in January 1999. At the direction of former President Boris Yeltsin, an Iranian proposal for a uranium mining project in Iran was rejected because, under U.S. pressure, Russia refused to sell enrichment technology and dual-use equipment to Iran. This caused serious damage to Russia, and several Russian organizations were also placed under U.S. sanctions. Iran, in turn, also found itself in a difficult situation due to disruptions in its missile and nuclear programs.

Russian-Iranian relations were formed in the context of a fully-fledged Russian-Ukrainian war. Russia is thus attempting to advance its national interests against the US, EU, and NATO, thereby attempting to shape its global leadership strategy (Mahmoudian 2023). Clearly, this circumstance also influences Russian-Iranian relations.

The New World Order doctrine marked the introduction of a new phenomenon into the international political system: U.S. intervention in resolving and resolving global and regional problems and conflicts. In this sense, an emphasis on collective security is also a fundamental tenet of U.S. doctrine.

The essence of this phenomenon lies in the distribution of international responsibility for collective security, which is merely a pretext for ensuring not only the U.S.'s own security but also that of all NATO member states. Interestingly, the

⁹ CIA. 1998. "Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions, 1 January Through 30 June 1998." Accessed November 30, 2025. https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000839061.pdf.

involvement of other elements of the international system in resolving global security issues is aimed at reducing Washington's costs and the number of responsibilities imposed on them. Those states interested in feeling secure, and ultimately defending their own security, are willing to cooperate with the U.S. and do not threaten American interests. The situation is exacerbated when UN Security Council members violate UN rules.

Thus, Moscow's emphasis on relations with Washington during Boris Yeltsin's presidency, along with America's foreign policy doctrine during the same period, weakened Russian-Iranian relations.

The rise of Vladimir Putin to the Russian leadership in late 1999 marked the beginning of Russia's implementation of a pragmatic approach in its foreign policy and the pursuit of an independent political line based on Russian national interests. This change in Russian foreign policy course somewhat eased U.S. pressure on Russian-Iranian relations. Under these new circumstances, Washington's efforts, compared to the situation in the 1990s, proved insufficient to seriously damage cooperation between the two countries.

In November 2000, Russia terminated the Chernomyrdin-Gore Agreement¹⁰, and Putin's decision led to the imposition of anti-Russian sanctions by the U.S., banning the purchase of Russian rockets for launching satellites into orbit, curtailing investment, and complicating Russia's foreign debt repayment terms. Despite continued pressure, in July 2002, Russia announced that it would not only complete construction of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant but also intend to build additional nuclear power plants in Iran¹¹. The Russian leadership's position was that even if Iran did not sign the Additional Protocol, Russia would continue to supply fuel to the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant. Russian-Iranian cooperation during this period reached its zenith in 2007 with the signing of an agreement for Russia to supply Iran with the S-300 air defense system, one of the most advanced missile defense systems.

In the U.S., a somewhat different situation emerged after the Republicans came to power under George W. Bush in 2000. U.S. foreign policy underwent significant changes, and the turning point in this process was the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. The policy of nuclear deterrence gave way to a policy of preventive war, and U.S. behavior immediately became characterized by aggressiveness and disregard for international law. George W. Bush relied on the country's military might. Striving for absolute security, the American government focused all its efforts on developing military resources.

The main tenets of the new U.S. foreign policy program became preemptive attack, unilateralism, the spread of democracy, and the war on terrorism. All of this together triggered the tragic events in the Middle East. The U.S. attack on Iraq was not

¹⁰ Office of the Vice President. 1993. Statement by Vice President Al Gore. September 1, 1993. Accessed November 30, 2025. <https://clintonwhitehouse6.archives.gov/1993/09/1993-09-01-gore-statement-russia.html>.

¹¹ World Nuclear Association. 2025. Nuclear Power in Iran. December 4, 2025. Accessed December 5, 2025. <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/iran>; IAEA. 2025. Iran, Islamic Republic of. Accessed December 5, 2025. <https://pris.iaea.org/PRIS/CountryStatistics/CountryDetails.aspx?current=IR>.

sanctioned by the UN Security Council and did not receive support from leading European countries, including Russia and France. However, America had its own goals, which it persistently pursued. In January 2002, President Bush coined the term ‘axis of evil’, referring to three countries—North Korea, Iraq, and Iran—and accused them of supporting international terrorism and seeking to proliferation of nuclear weapons. From that moment on, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction became the most important threats to U.S. national security.

Thus, Russia’s pursuit of an independent policy toward Iran during this period could have significantly reduced U.S. influence on Russian-Iranian relations, given the American leadership’s declaration of Iran as part of the ‘axis of evil’ and its desire to isolate the Iranian state internationally.

Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency from 2008 to 2012 marked a reset of sorts, a new stage in Russian-American relations. This undoubtedly had a strong impact on Russian-Iranian relations during the Barack Obama administration. Notably, President Medvedev placed a strong emphasis on the West in his policies. A negative consequence of the rapprochement between Russia and the U.S. was the deterioration of Russian-Iranian relations, directly reflected in Russia’s refusal to supply Iran with the S-300 air defense system and Russia’s agreement to impose strict sanctions against Iran. At the same time, after 2006, due to Western pressure on Iran over its nuclear program, no country was prepared for the consequences of cooperation with Iran. Thus, even the limited cooperation that continued between Russia and Iran during this period may testify to the depth of friendly relations between the two countries.

B. Obama’s foreign policy retains many of the key principles established by his predecessors, including the presence of American troops in Afghanistan and the practice of U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of other states.

Terrorism, nuclear weapons, and global crises continued to constitute the primary threats to the U.S., according to the 2010 National Security Strategy¹². However, the focus was now shifted from the fight against terrorism to cooperation and the development of military potential. The strategy of preventive war was replaced by a strategy of competition and cooperation, including cooperation with Russia. As for national security, so important to the American leadership, a very inventive step was taken in this area. Nuclear terrorism has been publicly declared by the U.S. to be a threat to interconnected security, implying that all actions to prevent terrorists from gaining access to nuclear weapons are justified and humane.

Thus, U.S. policy has had a destructive impact on Russian-Iranian relations. During Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency, the level of cooperation between Iran and Russia in the nuclear and military spheres has declined significantly.

Vladimir Putin’s subsequent presidency, from 2012 to the present, has been marked by growing tensions in relations between Russia and the West, following events in Ukraine and the West’s imposition of political and economic sanctions against Russia in 2014. During this time, the threat of terrorism in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, has intensified. These circumstances have created favorable conditions for intensifying cooperation between Russia and Iran. It is also important that newly

¹² The White House. 2010. National Security Strategy, May 2010. Accessed November 30, 2025. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf.

elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate politician, initiated a foreign policy course aimed at reducing tensions in Tehran's relations with world powers, primarily regarding the Iranian nuclear program. For Russia, this reduced the risk of cooperation with Iran, which, recognizing its shared objectives with Russia in the Middle East, particularly in resolving the Syrian crisis, sought to take advantage of the cooling in relations between Russia and the U.S. growing idea among Iranian politicians is that success in countering U.S. regional partners—Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar—in Syria can only be achieved through an alliance with Russia. In this context, we believe that former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's pro-Western approach to Iranian foreign policy and the need to improve Iran's relations with the West as one of the priorities are a worrying signal for Russia, calling on it to pay more attention to its relations with Iran.

The 2014 U.S. Defense Posture Review, which remains relevant today, calls for an expanded U.S. military presence in Asia and the Middle East. Iran's regional politics and asymmetric power are declared the primary threat, and appropriate mechanisms will be developed by 2020 to counter them. This again implies a strategy of U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of other states, albeit through slightly different means. The new National Security Strategy of February 6, 2015, once again develops the idea of America achieving leadership on a wide range of issues, with the subordination of other countries to the U.S. consistently remaining a key message. Iran's regional activity is a pressing concern in this context, leading to repeated references to the availability of all options for countering Iranian expansion. As for other states, including European ones, the clear goal is evident: to sow discord in relations between global players in order to influence their power, undermine it, and persuade them to ally with the U.S. For example, the section 'Strengthening Our Enduring Alliance with Europe' is devoted to the Ukrainian issue. American leadership has attempted to portray Russia's approach to the political crisis in Ukraine as a serious threat to the entire European continent. The 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy¹³ explicitly states that the processes currently unfolding in Ukraine and the actions of pro-Western forces in Kyiv are coordinated by the United States.

Russia's independent policy and the agreement reached on Iran's nuclear program have led to the U.S. ceasing to exert a decisive influence on Russian-Iranian relations. Russia and Iran are developing and supporting a policy of resisting the increased control and influence of the U.S. and NATO, which claim to establish the ultimate authority, negate the role of the UN, and reduce the regulation of global processes and the fate of states to the will of new world leaders. Nevertheless, an analysis of the state of Russia-Iran relations without considering the nature of U.S. policy and the extent of its influence is nearly impossible. Throughout the recent history of Russian-Iranian relations, increasing U.S. influence has led to a weakening of Russian-Iranian cooperation, and conversely, a decrease in such influence has contributed to an improvement in relations between the two countries. It is also important to consider that Russia, compared to Iran, plays a more important role in containing U.S. pressure. Russia and Iran occupy different positions on the international stage and possess

¹³ The White House. 2015. National Security Strategy, February 2015. Accessed November 30, 2025. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf.

different potential in world affairs. In a multipolar world, different countries have different potential, as all states can be classified according to their potential into five groups: superpowers, great powers, middle powers, small (insignificant) powers, and micropowers. According to this classification, Russian-American relations are the relations between two superpowers, which operate at the global level and significantly influence Russian-Iranian relations. The latter are considered to be relations between a superpower and a middle power. Based on this, it can be argued that Russian-Iranian relations are significantly influenced by Russian foreign policy and the nature of Russia's relations with the United States.

It is clear that Russia and Iran seek to limit U.S. influence in their relations with each other. Common interests and threats, as well as Russia and Iran's geographic proximity, mean that the two countries share common interests in many areas (Smagin 2025). Expanded Russian-Iranian cooperation is currently developing in the economic, military-technical, nuclear energy, and security spheres. The scope of regional cooperation between Russia and Iran has now expanded beyond Central Asia, the Caspian region, and the South Caucasus to Syria. Russia and Iran's proximity to each other underscores the existence of common security threats that cannot be addressed without joint cooperation. These threats include the spread of terrorism, the drug threat, and the infiltration of NATO and the U.S. into the region.

The long history of Russian-Iranian relations, which have experienced repeated ups and downs, has resulted in a wealth of experience in cooperation, mutual understanding, and mutual respect between Russia and Iran. Iran recognizes Russia's status as a global power with which it can reach an understanding on bilateral and regional issues and is making efforts to establish close relations with Russia. Russia, in turn, recognizing Iran's weight in the region and the extent of its influence on developments in the Middle East, is seeking to capitalize on Iran's potential (Tazmini 2021). The two countries have managed to reach mutual understanding on a number of issues on which they previously had disagreements, such as the supply of S-300 missile systems. Iran recognizes Russia's superiority in Central Asia and the Caucasus and tries to avoid the emergence of significant contradictions with Russia in pursuing its policies.

Conclusion and discussion

Since 2022, both countries have noticeably converged in their foreign policy positions, given that Russia, seeking to strengthen its status as a regional power, is seeking to distance itself from Western centers of power by embracing a multipolar world model. Iran is also seeking to present itself as a regional power within the existing international system. In our opinion, these changes have contributed to the emergence of common ground in areas such as a commitment to the principle of multipolarity, joint efforts to limit U.S. influence in the Middle East, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia, the fight against EU and NATO expansion, the search for an optimal solution to counter terrorism, particularly in Syria and Afghanistan, and the expansion of economic cooperation, including in nuclear energy and arms.

Military cooperation is a key area of Russian-Iranian intergovernmental relations. Despite the influence of foreign policy factors and the intervention of Western

countries, particularly the U.S., to restrict arms supplies to Iran and Russia, this area can be considered one of the most stable aspects of Russian-Iranian cooperation. This can be explained as follows: firstly, a significant portion of the military sphere, which includes arms sales and purchases, is economic in nature, influenced by global arms market rules, and dependent on supply and demand systems. Secondly, common security threats to Russia and Iran, including the expanding influence of the U.S., the EU, and NATO in the Middle East, South Caucasus, and Central Asia, as well as the spread of terrorism, have had a positive impact on this area and led to the expansion of military cooperation.

Russia and Iran interact within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has been controversial due to the change in the status of Iran's nuclear program and its referral to the UN Security Council by the IAEA. This change in status led to a series of sanctions that have seriously impacted Russian-Iranian relations, particularly in the nuclear field. Secondly, Western countries and the U.S. pressured Russia, limiting its nuclear relations with Iran at a time when Russia was attempting to improve relations with the U.S. In negotiations to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, Russia's primary role was to resolve the crisis, which had global dimensions. At the same time, it is believed that a global decline in energy prices, caused by Iran's return to the energy market, is not in Russia's interests. However, Russia's willingness to play a constructive role in resolving this issue has strengthened trust and expanded the space for cooperation between the political elites of Russia and Iran.

The newly independent post-Soviet states that emerged after the collapse of the USSR began to influence various aspects of Russian-Iranian relations, as both countries sought to balance bilateral relations in the South Caucasus, the Caspian region, and Central Asia with the interests of new political actors. These countries' cooperation with the U.S., EU, and NATO is leading to the spread of Western influence in these regions, which has become and continues to be a challenge to the interests of Russia and Iran. One of the key areas of cooperation between Russia and Iran has become the development of the transportation network, and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) project¹⁴ could become a means of eliminating Western influence in the post-Soviet space, alongside comprehensive cooperation between Russia and Iran in other areas. The post-Soviet space faces serious problems that require the participation of all countries in the region.

Under the current circumstances, energy serves as an integrating factor, facilitating cooperation between various countries and regions. On the other hand, the energy sector has significant conflict potential. Energy is used as a geopolitical tool, and political interests are increasingly influencing energy development. All countries place great emphasis on access to and control over energy resources, and they employ all available means, including diplomacy, to ensure energy security. In this regard, the first chapter of this dissertation separately examines the energy strategies of Russia and Iran.

¹⁴ Eurasian Development Bank. 2022. "International North-South Transport Corridor: Investments and Soft Infrastructure." Reports and Working Papers 22 (2). Accessed November 30, 2025. https://eabr.org/upload/iblock/687/EDB_2022_Report-2_INSTC_eng.pdf.

Russia and Iran are among the largest energy producers and exporters, playing a significant and influential role in the global energy market. They are inevitably involved, and will become increasingly involved, in the process of globalization. Oil and gas resources are important factors influencing the national security of Iran and Russia. This study concluded that energy security is directly linked to the geopolitical position of countries and their neighbors. From a geopolitical perspective, Iran and Russia occupy a unique position on the global geopolitical map. Amid its confrontation with the U.S., Iran has begun to closely cooperate with Russia, ceding certain market positions to it in order to join its confrontation with the West.

In the face of globalization challenges, growing international exchange and interdependence, and the emergence of new energy security challenges, cooperation between Russia and Iran must be long-term, effective, and truly mutually beneficial, taking into account common interests and threats. Expanding the capabilities of the North-South Transport Corridor and Iran's participation in the SCO will create additional opportunities for fostering mutual understanding between Russia and Iran and expanding their energy cooperation. Overall, it can be argued that developing energy cooperation between Russia and Iran will contribute to the deepening of their strategic partnership in the long term.

Iran and Russia are committed to addressing the complex issues surrounding Caspian hydrocarbons, including the legal status of the sea-lake, exploration and development of fields, and the selection of routes for transporting hydrocarbons to global markets.

The two countries' geographic location makes them *de facto* monopolists in the creation of a unique transport corridor connecting Europe with the Asia-Pacific region. Russia has also always been well aware that without Iran, many of the Caucasus's problems, from economic to security, cannot be resolved. By establishing good relations with Iran, Russia is strengthening its own security and that of the Caucasus. A key role in realizing Iran's aspirations was given to transforming the country into a major global transit hub with transport corridors passing through its territory. By developing trade and economic relations with Russia, Iran was also attempting to address one of the key objectives of its export policy: increasing non-oil exports and reducing its economy's dependence on oil exports.

In the modern world, the issues and principles of building an allied relationship between Russia and Iran are becoming increasingly important. An integral part of these relations is the military-political dimension, bilateral strategic alliances, and integration associations, which, in turn, are not static and are subject to various centrifugal processes that could lead to their disintegration.

From the perspective of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Caucasus, these issues are of particular interest in the context of Russian-Iranian relations. Due to the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic development of this structurally heterogeneous and conflict-prone region, there is no clear leader; a number of players invariably claim this role. The political situation in the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Caucasus states is characterized by significant fluidity, a multi-layered nature, and a low degree of predictability in future developments. The knot of unresolved long-standing conflicts is increasingly tightening. Even in those countries where the domestic

political situation seemed relatively stable, deep socio-economic and ethno-confessional contradictions have emerged, which have already led to the emergence of new points of armed confrontation and to the imbalance of the established regional structure.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical standards

The authors affirm this research did not involve human subjects.

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