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Iran-Russia Relations after the Ukraine War*

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Abstract

Russia's military attack on Ukraine has had profound consequences not only for the Middle East, but also for the world. The political-security relations of the two countries, have been affected by this war. Since the beginning of Russia's military operation in Ukraine, Tehran has accepted Moscow's rationale for this attack and has shown its political support at the United Nations General Assembly, but Iran has been cautious in fully supporting this war. Iran's approach regarding the war in Ukraine is important in two ways. First, Iran's orientation towards this war affects Tehran's relations with Moscow. Second, this orientation affects Iran's interests in the international system. For this reason, the main question of this article is "What was Iran's attitude towards the war in Ukraine and how did it affect the relations between Tehran and Moscow?" The hypothesis of the authors is that "Iran's approach towards the war in Ukraine has been cautious - it has neither officially condemned nor supported the Russian invasion of Ukraine - this policy is aimed at maintaining and continuing the relations between the two countries. The purpose of this article is to examine the orientations of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards the war in Ukraine and its effect on the country's relations with Russia. The authors' method in this research is qualitative with a descriptive-analytical approach.

Keywords: Iran, Russia, Ukraine, USA, Geopolitics, International System

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Introduction

It can be said that during the last decades, Russia has played an important role in the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy, both cooperation in international organizations (especially in the UN Security Council), regional cooperation (military cooperation in the Syrian civil war) and in supplying Iran with different kinds of weapons. In fact, Iran has tried to maintain friendly relations with one of the most powerful countries in the world, Russia, due to various conflicts with the Western bloc, especially the United States and in the unpredictable conditions of the Middle East. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Ukraine, this country has faced special conditions that makes it a geopolitical axis in the new global geography after the Cold War. Russia has always been sensitive to the developments in Ukraine and the direction of its domestic and foreign policy. The US has also consistently focused on Ukraine to prevent the re-emergence of Russia as a major world power. The interests of Moscow and Washington have caused the developments in Ukraine to be significantly influenced by the policies of the two countries.

Considering that Iran's orientation towards the Ukraine war directly affects its relations with Moscow as well as its interests in the international system, the main purpose of this article is to identify Iran's approach towards the war in Ukraine and its impact on its relations with Russia. Before this war, nuclear negotiations to revive Iran Nuclear deal (The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA) seemed within reach. The outbreak of the war first changed the positions of Tehran and Moscow and there was uncertainty about the negotiations and even concerns about its collapse. By the late March 2022, negotiations seemed to be back on track and an agreement was within reach. Beyond the JCPOA, the new cold war that pits Russia against the transatlantic alliance has been re-examined inside Iran considering its consequences on the country's position in the world order. This research is qualitative in terms of

method and practical in terms of purpose. In this article, the authors have investigated Iran's orientation towards Russia's attack on Ukraine. With a brief overview of the relations between Iran and Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they have examined the impact of the war in Ukraine on these relations. In this context, attention has been paid to the statements of high-ranking officials of the country. Although there are differences between the claim and real policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, like other countries, Iran's official policy has been very cautious in this regard. The author's hypothesis is that based on Iran's foreign policy priorities and its confrontation with the West, especially the United States, in the midst of the Ukraine war and after, we will continue to see no change in Iran-Russia relations. Therefore, the approach of this research will be descriptive-analytical. Library and internet resources were also used to collect information.

Regarding the Russian military operations in Ukraine in February 2022, due to the newness of this issue, not many scientific-research works have been published but about the relations between Russia and Iran, some books and articles have been published in recent years which will be examined further.

1- Literature Review

Asadi & Monavari (2021), in the article "Examination of Iran-Russia Relations in the New Century: Strategic Alliance or Convergence of Interests" believe that the relationship between Iran and Russia has been temporary and unstable despite the increase in cooperation. According to the authors, their relations does not have the characteristics of a strategic alliance. Koolae, Mousavi& Abedi (2020), in the article "The Ups and downs of Iran-Russia relations in the last four decades", believe that the common interests of the two countries interfere with the influence of the United States in West and Central Asia. According to these authors, relations with the US have been one of the

most influential factors in the relations between the two countries. Shokoohi (2023), in his article "Putin's Misperceptions and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022" discusses Putin's misperception of Russia's military power, Ukraine's will and power to resist, his misperception of Ukraine's intentions and the reactions of third parties to the war, critically contributed to and precipitated his decision to start the war. Koolae& Naeeni (2021), in an article titled "The Impact of Russia and the US Rivalry on Iran's Regional Situation" examine how the "Arab Spring" changed the security order and influenced the political and military strategies of major powers in the Middle East.

In the authors view, Neo-classical realism has a great potential to explain Russian foreign policy motivations, decision-making processes and behaviors. «The premise of Neo-classical realism is the constant conflict between power and security factors in the world and widespread uncertainty» (Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, 2009: 4). Neo-classical realism considers the ambition of a country as a result of its foreign policy and relative factors of its power. However, the influence of power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressure changes the relationship of unit-level variables such as decision-makers' perception and government structure. «In the view of Neo-classical realists, material power forms the indicators of a country's foreign policy and foreign policy is based on their perception of power relations» (Rose, 1998:148). «Neo-classicists believe that the foreign policy of countries is primarily formed by the threats and opportunities created in the international system. According to them, the motivation of survival causes countries to focus on external stimuli» (Rose, 1998: 152).

Iranian officials consider Moscow's efforts to improve relations with Iran as an opportunity to establish a close partnership with Russia. Iranian leaders thought an immediate political reconciliation with the United States and to some extent the European Union was possible. Russia's support for Tehran in the

nuclear negotiations is seen as a guarantee for the continuation of these negotiations until positive results are obtained for Iran. The similarity of the views and interests of Russia and Iran on regional issues is significant for Tehran, which is trying to play an influential role in the troubled region of the Middle East.

2- Iran- Russia's Relations before the Ukrainian War

Russia has been one of the most important partners of Iran's foreign policy, both in the international arena (cooperation in international organizations, especially at the UN Security Council) and at the regional level (Russia's military cooperation with Iran and Syria). This country has played an important and unique role in the Syrian crisis and in the field of supplying weapons to Iran. «In fact, due to Iran's independence-oriented foreign policy and a variety of issues and substantive differences with the West, especially with the United States and in the turbulent conditions in the Middle East, Iran has tried to keep its only friend among the powerful countries of the world- Russia- in a mutually beneficial relationship. The same factor caused the positions of Iran and Russia in Syria to overlap tactically and the strategic differences of the two countries regarding the future of Syria and the Middle East were at least temporarily put aside.

Two categories of internal and external factors are the main obstacles to the expansion of cooperation between the two countries. The absence of economic complements (Koolae & Kavianifar, 2021: 63_84), the dependence of Iran's and Russia's economies on energy exports, the two countries' economic statehood and cultural and social differences have hindered the expansion of economic and political relations between the two countries. This is while the Iranian government considers the enmity with America to be endless. Based on this, despite the efforts of Iran and Russia to neutralize the American factor in the

bilateral relationship, when the interests of Tehran and Moscow are raised in a different issue and the issue of the West, historical cynicism and mistrust casts a shadow on the relations between the two countries» (Sazhin, 2022).

The structure of the international system has always been very influential on the relations between Iran and Russia. The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are examples of this issue. Russia is trying to show the West that it is not possible to solve global problems and crises especially in the region without the intervention of this country. In the past decades, the United States have always played an influential role in the relations between the two countries» (Therme, 2022:18). During the periods «when the relations between Russia and the United States became closer, such as during Medvedev's presidency, the relations between Russia and Iran clearly decreased and this country did not fulfill its obligations towards Iran, one of the examples of which can be seen in the failure to deliver S-300 missile systems (Koolae& Abedi, 2016: 135_164).

In general, the spheres of interaction between Iran and Russia can be divided into two directions: the first one is related to tactical interaction and implies cooperation between the two countries in response to current challenges and threats. This primarily includes the war in Syria and efforts to preserve the Iran nuclear deal. The second case is related to the development of relations, especially long-term projects in economic, energy and military fields» (Therme, 2022: 11). The two countries have agreed to develop a decentralized approach to bilateral relations that allows cooperation in areas where both countries share common goals without jeopardizing each other's vital interests.

2-1- Putin's place in Iranian leadership mindset

Shortly «after Putin was elected president of Russia, the majority of reformists entered the parliament in the Iranian parliamentary elections. These

developments caused Moscow to worry about the possibility of improvement in Tehran-Washington relations. But after Khatami's meeting with Putin at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2002, the situation improved» (Koolae& Abedi, 2018: 155_170).

At the same time, Putin, emphasized that Moscow must act with skill and initiative between its military behavior towards China, India and Iran and its autocratic approach abroad and create a better image of itself in the West (Koolae& Azizi, 2019: 222). After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Russia cooperated effectively with the United States and NATO in terms of logistical support for the military attack on Afghanistan. In October 2001, Putin rejected the terms of the Gor-Chernomerdin agreement and announced that he would again sell weapons to Iran and complete the Bushehr Nuclear power plant. Unlike the first decade after Russia's independence, when the western approach dominated the country's foreign policy, the development of Russia's relations with Iran was followed.

For Iran's leaders, the increase in ongoing conflicts with the US and the acceleration of competition and regional instability strengthen their relations with Russia. After India and China, Iran is estimated to be the third importer of weapons from Russia. For Tehran, access to Russian military technologies and the simultaneous construction of missiles by Iran can prevent the increase of Western threats against Tehran under the pretext of nuclearization and help Iran's regional credibility. In a situation where the American pressures were intensifying, Russia's relations with Iran were improving, but with the transfer of power from Putin to Dmitry Medvedev in 2008, the relations between Tehran and Moscow suffered a significant stagnation.

2-2- Russia's support for sanctions against Iran

Moscow first welcomed the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the president of Iran in 2005, because it considered him an ally against the common

enemy of the two countries, the United States. Medvedev signaled the beginning of a new era of Russian foreign policy, where Moscow is more willing to be in harmony with the West. Soon, he and Obama launched the "reset" policy to improve relations between the two countries. Although this diplomacy did not have the previous duality, it put more pressure on Iran.

«The relations between Iran and Russia in 2009-2010 were strained following the widespread protests against the election results. In the atmosphere of cold relations between the US and Russia, this country had signed a one-billion-dollar contract for the sale of S-300 missile systems to Iran» (Trenin, 2018: 23). But with the issuance of Security Council Resolution 1929 against Iran's nuclear program, Russia also suspended its delivery. The effects of Russia-US cooperation were revealed in the approval of Resolution 1737 against Iran in 2010 and the subsequent Russian sanctions against Iran.

On September 22, 2010, Medvedev issued a decree to implement Security Council Resolution No. 1929 of June 6, 2010, based on which, the export of tanks, armored vehicles, large-caliber cannons, warplanes, as well as the transfer of S-300 systems, helicopters, frigates and anti-aircraft systems to Iran was banned and the provision of financial services to Iranian natural and legal entities was prohibited. Medvedev's order prohibited any economic relations, including transactions with the Iranian government and citizens.

From 2006 to 2009, after approving the resolutions of the Board of Governors of the International Nuclear Energy Organization, Russia voted in favor of all Security Council resolutions against Iran (Kazhanov, 2015: 6). Russia received some concessions from the United States in exchange for this cooperation which include: the suspension of NATO expansion to the east (especially to Ukraine and Georgia), Suspending the creation of the third zone of the US anti-missile defense shield in Eastern Europe, the agreement to sign the START-1 treaty, US agreement with Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization, the

resumption of the Russia-NATO Council and finally the issue of establishing a common anti-missile defense shield between the two countries at the summit of Russia and NATO in November 2010 in Lisbon.

2-3- Putin's Return and the Iran Nuclear Deal

Putin returned to the Kremlin as the president in 2012. During Iran's negotiations with the world powers, Russia always paid special attention to reassuring Israel about Iran's nuclear program and the agreement of the 5+1 group. Putin followed this policy seriously» (Kasting& Fite, 2012). The victory of Hassan Rouhani and the eminence of the moderate discourse in the 2013 elections in Iran, with the promise of de-escalation in relations with the West and the resolution of Iran's nuclear issue, once again increased Russia's attention to Iran. Russia always worry about the improvement of Iran's relations with the United States and Europe and its negative impact on its relations with Iran. The common approaches of the two countries on issues such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria made Sergey Lavrov to call Iran a "natural ally" of Russia in September 2014» (Kozhanov, 2015: 9). Russia's problems with the United States and Europe regarding Ukraine especially after the sanctions against, had a greater impact on the relations between the two countries. The process of expansion of "Arab Revolutions" made the closeness of Iran and Russia more prominent in confronting the obvious interference of the United States in the democratic process of the people of West Asia and North Africa (Sayadi& Sanai, 2019: 115_135).

At the same time, the developments in Russia and Iran, including the crisis in Ukraine and the embargo on Russia by the West and the conclusion of the nuclear negotiations and most importantly, Russia's entry into the operational scene of the Syrian war, brought the relations between Tehran and Moscow into a new phase. The leaders of Iran and Russia know very well that despite the different fields for cooperation between the two countries, they have serious and

undeniable competition with each other in issues such as energy and its transmission, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Azizi& Hamidfar, 2019: 381_389). Iran and the 5+1 group reached a comprehensive nuclear agreement (JCPOA) that changed the prospect of improving Iran's relations with the West» (Parker, 2019:2). A development that cannot be considered pleasant for the leaders of the Kremlin. Of course, «the fact that after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula to Russia, this country was subjected to western sanctions, has added to the deepening and development of relations between the two countries. Against the intensification of American pressure, Iran continues to the increasing expansion of relations with Russia» (Valizadeh& Salehi, 2019: 300_303).

Western sanctions against Iran and Russia have created another reason for the two countries' interest in expanding bilateral trade ties. Iran with its large population provides a market for Russian goods and services, and Russia has tried to encourage closer cooperation between Iran and the member states of Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). For its part, Iran also looks at the EEU with its significant market as a good opportunity to become one of the most important routes for the transfer of goods and services between the countries in this union and South Asia, particularly India.

«The North-South corridor has also created a good opportunity for Iran and Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan to work toward more cooperation based on common interest» (Koolae& Norouzi Zarmehri, 2021:804). Iran's cooperation with Russia and Azerbaijan in completing the North-South corridor would increase regional trade and economic mobility and will enhance Iran's national security due to the following reasons:

1. Encouraging free trade,
2. Modernizing trade infrastructure,
3. Increasing the investment by the private sector,
4. Facilitating economic diversification,
5. Decreasing the negative impact of U.S. sanctions against Iran and Russia,
- 6.

Increasing Iran's economic relations with the Eurasian countries which might generate more export revenues, 7. Increasing Iran's bargaining power on various regional issues, 8. Iran's membership in regional organizations reduces its international isolation and helps it to be in a better position to interact with state and non-state extra-regional players such as the World Bank, and WTO, 9. Facilitating regional cooperation in confronting external security threats in the region.

The formation of Ebrahim Raisi's government in Iran was also a step in this direction. However, Russia has shown that it does not want to become Iran's shield against the United States. Unlike Russia, Iran considers this region as part of its national security and survival.

3- The Energy Factor in Iran- Russia's Relations

The energy factor should be considered a challenge in Russia- Iran relations. Both countries have large oil and gas reserves and play an important role in the global energy market. Russia's strategy is to increase its role in the Middle East, to become an intermediary between the United States and Iran and to ensure Russia's superiority in the field of energy (María Ballesteros, 2022). After the lifting of sanctions in 2015, many observers expected Iran to enter the European gas market, both as a supplier and as an energy transmission hub and in this way, it could connect countries with gas resources in the Caspian region to the global markets, including Europe. Iran had not prepared suitable infrastructure to be present in such a situation.

After the 2014 Ukraine crisis, European Union tried to diversify its gas supply sources to reduce dependence on Russia. But "the policy of looking to the West" in Iran does not weaken the position of Russia in Europe. Russia makes significant use of Iran's restrictions in the field of oil and gas. Trade with Russia has become one of the most effective tools for Iran to help mitigate the impact

of sanctions. With the inauguration of the 13th government and the support of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Russian President Vladimir Putin, relations between Iran and Russia have taken a new direction and the two countries want to expand it in all economic and political fields. However, the nuclear, military and energy sectors remain the bedrock of cooperation between the two countries despite the complicated history of relations. Nevertheless, regional processes and the change of the global paradigm have influenced the transformation of current relations between Russia and Iran. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Iran has become one of the important partners in Russia's foreign policy.

4- Iran and the war in Ukraine

The official reaction of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Russian invasion both from the state media and from the authorities was a reflection of Moscow's war propaganda. In this regard, the president of Iran considered "preserving the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of all countries" as the most important principle. For the most part, the Russian invasion was referred to as a "special military operation", prompted by the eastward expansion of NATO led by the United States. From this point of view, Russia protects its security against Western expansionism. This narrative has been told by the main Iranian media (affiliated to the government) and government officials (including the leader, the president and the minister of foreign affairs). According to Iranian officials, Russia's attack on Ukraine in the face of the threat from the West is for Tehran's own interests and it overlaps with Iran's grand strategy to fight the United States. "The US actually started the Ukraine war," Ayatollah Khamenei, said during a speech in Mashhad (Motamedi, 2023). Ayatollah Khamenei with emphasize the importance of understanding the root of the crisis in Ukraine said: "The root of the crisis in Ukraine is American and Western policies.

«In a telephone conversation with Putin, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi

emphasized the necessity of protecting the interests of the nations of the region in this crisis» (Kayhan,2022). Raisi had a telephone conversation with Putin, during which he emphasized the importance of the continuous development of economic cooperation between the two countries (Fars News, 2023).

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian also said: "Unlike the West, which has given billions of dollars in weapons to Ukraine, the Islamic Republic of Iran has not given any weapons to any side for the war in Ukraine and does not support any side in this war (Fars News, 2023). In a telephone conversation with the Swiss Foreign Minister, he emphasized that we are against the continuation of the war in Ukraine (IRNA, 2023). Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also said: For the political solution of the crisis, the Islamic Republic of Iran invites the parties to stop the conflicts and an immediate ceasefire for negotiations. Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, wrote in a tweet on the second day of the conflict in Ukraine: Nothing is hated more than war, but when the West seeks to attack the national security of countries with various methods, it is actually directly responsible for the wars (Donya-e-Eqtesad, 2022). All Iranian authorities accused the US interventionist policy in Ukraine and condemned its militaristic policies.

On July 15, 2022, Amir Abdollahian emphasized Iran's position against the war (Government Islamic Republic of Iran, 2022). On August 31, 2022, he went to Moscow and in a joint press conference with Lavrov said:" We conveyed the message of one of the European leaders and their request regarding Ukraine to Raisi. Since the Iranian authorities consider the presence of the US in West Asia as one of the most important factors of unrest in this region, they proposed the same approach in the Ukraine war. In this war, Iran considers the expansion of NATO to Eastern Europe as the main driver of this war.

5- The impact of the Ukraine war on Iran and Russia's relations

The war in Ukraine in 2022 is an important issue that has affected bilateral, regional and international relations between Russia and Iran. This event contains opportunities and threats for Iran. The opportunities include: The intensification of gap between great powers and the possibility of creating opportunities for Iran in the light of these differences, the energy crisis in Europe, its impact on nuclear negotiations and the interest of European countries in revitalizing the JCPOA in the light of the energy crisis and reducing the US intervention in the Middle East region. In a situation where the Islamic Republic of Iran has faced the United States and European countries due to the challenges of the nuclear issue and some other issues and the government does not have a positive attitude towards Western countries and the expansion of relations with them, the approach of "looking to the East" and especially the relationship with Russia has gained special importance in Iran's foreign policy.

Thus, Iran has become one of the important partners in Russia's foreign policy. Today, these relations are still subject to fluctuations (Koolae& Mousavi & Abedi, 2020: 229). However, the two countries have reached an understanding to set a decentralized approach to bilateral relations that allows cooperation in areas where both countries share common goals without jeopardizing each other's vital interests. However, the position of Iran and Russia is not equal for securing interests and Iran accompanies Russia more in the conditions of international isolation. Based on "Easternism" policy, Iran recognizes the prominent role of Russia in Eurasia, which it wants to be a part of. It is obvious that Moscow often takes advantage of Iran's interests to advance its strategies. An example of that was when Russia tried to tie Iran's negotiations to revive the JCPOA to freeing it from Western sanctions.

«In March 2022, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, taking advantage of Russia's position as one of the main members of the JCPOA, asked the United States to ensure that the JCPOA includes guarantees for the exemption of

Russian and Iranian trade from sanctions» (Hafezi, Pamuk& Lewis, 2022). «This demand threatened to create a deadlock in the JCPOA negotiations at a time when a positive result was expected to be reached. It was clear that Russia was trying to use the JCPOA to reduce Western sanctions against Moscow. With this approach, Russia may use Iran to bypass Western sanctions and re-export the sanctioned goods as a tool to exploit the JCPOA's economic benefits. In this way, Iran is trying to save the JCPOA from the damage of Russia's military attack on Ukraine. Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian visited Moscow on March 15 and announced that the JCPOA talks will not be related to the war in Ukraine, but Lavrov claimed that Russia had received guarantees from the United States to withdraw from the deterrence position in the JCPOA» (Hussain, 2022). However, on November 10, 2022, the Guardian newspaper announced the use of Iran-made drones by Russia in the war with Ukraine» (Guardian, 2022). «The Guardian wrote: western sources told CNN that Iran has delivered 450 drones to Russia and they are going to send missiles to Russia as well. But Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's National Security Council, emphasized again the necessity of dialogue to end the war during the visit of Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev to Tehran on November 9» (Tabnak, 2022). «Nasser Kanani, the spokesman of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that Iran had not provided any military equipment to be used in the war in Ukraine» (IRNA, 2022). «But Hamshahri online, citing Al Jazeera, wrote that Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin spokesman, denied the purchase of drones from Iran» (Hamshahri, 2022, 713212). «The deputy representative of Russia in the United Nations, Dmitri Polyansky, also said that Russia only uses domestic drones in the war in Ukraine. In a tweet Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's representative to international organizations in Vienna, called the claim of using Iranian drones in the Ukraine war a clumsy excuse to stop the Vienna negotiations on the JCPOA» (Hamshahri, 2022, 713640).

The European Union has considered Iran's option to diversify its energy imports. Due to the war in Ukraine, the West hopes to revive its cooperation with Iran by lifting the sanctions against Iran. With the revival of the JCPOA, there may be an opportunity to strengthen Iran's strategic and military alliances in the Middle East through more economic ties among Iran's allies. Since the United States and the European Union are trying to choose the right options to pressure Russia, the war in Ukraine could be decisive for Tehran in adjusting its evolving strategy in the Eurasian region.

Conclusion

In the view of the Iranian leaders, the security interests of this country should be realized by using political-economic tools and a set of cooperation and confrontation strategies, taking into account the geopolitical priorities. Neo-classical realists believe that understanding how governments interpret the external environment and react to it, it is necessary to analyze how the pressure of the system affects the intervening variables of the unit such as the perception of the decision makers and the internal structure of the government.

In the situation of being threatened by NATO near its borders in Ukraine, Russia found its security in danger and with a military attack on Ukraine, it confronted the factor threatening its security, i.e., NATO. Russia's massive military attack on Ukraine has not only had deep and far-reaching consequences for the entire Middle East, but also for the world. This effect is evident on the relations between Russia and Iran especially in the political-security relations of the two countries. Since the beginning of Russia's military attack on Ukraine, Tehran has accepted Moscow's rationale for the attack and has shown its political support in the UN General Assembly but has been cautious about fully supporting the war. Because both countries consider the West and especially the expansion of NATO in the region as a cause of insecurity and both have a

common anti-Western and especially anti-American position. Iran's orientation regarding the war in Ukraine has been cautious and has neither officially condemned nor supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Tehran assumes that the war in Ukraine can act as a catalyst to resolve previous obstacles in the development of relations with Moscow, but not fundamentally change the nature of relations. For Iranian decision makers, Russia is one of the most important geopolitical partners of this country. They have adopted a strategic approach in the relations with Russia.

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