


The Consequences of Iran-Russia Defense and Security Cooperations during the Ukraine Crisis (2022)

Ayob Nikunahad¹ 
Seyyed Razi Emadi²
Mohsen Biuck³

1-Introduction

While cooperation among political units across various dimensions is widely accepted in international relations theory, the principle of distrust often complicates these efforts, particularly in the defense-security realm. This distrust heightens the security dilemma, making political units more sensitive to each other's actions. Historically, Iran and Russia have engaged in defense-security cooperation, despite experiencing fluctuations in their bilateral relations. This cooperation, along with the conflicts that have arisen in this domain, is not a new phenomenon.

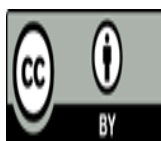
The normative and structural limitations of the international system, coupled with the policies of the Western bloc toward Iran over the past four decades, have prompted the Islamic Republic to adopt an "East-oriented" approach in its defense-security and foreign policies. Since 2011, Iran and Russia have increasingly focused on defense-security cooperation. However, following the Ukraine crisis in 2022, a new phase of defense-security collaboration has emerged between the two nations.

This research aims to explore the potential consequences of defense-security cooperation between Iran and Russia during the Ukraine crisis for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

¹ Assistant Professor of Khatam Al Anbia Air Defense University. anikunahad@gmail.com

² PhD in International Relations and Lecturer of Shahid Sattari Army University of Science and Technology. seddraziemadi@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor of Khatam Al-Anbia Army Air Defense University. mohsen.b.t89@gmail.com



2- Method and Theoretical Framework

The research employs a descriptive-analytical method and data collection was carried out by referring to reliable articles, books, and reports. By utilizing this method, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play within the international system, as well as the implications for state behavior and interactions among various actors.

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the theory of structural realism, and the data have been analyzed within the framework of this theory. While structural realism acknowledges key tenets of realism—such as the significance of power, the anarchical nature of the international system, self-help, and the balance of power—it introduces essential modifications to this theory. One of the most critical changes is the emphasis on the systemic level of analysis when examining political phenomena.

In analyzing international phenomena, Waltz emphasizes systemic level of analysis in examination of individual political units. He argues that the international structure plays a crucial role in shaping the political behavior of countries within international relations. Specifically, the international system is the primary factor influencing the actions of various actors. International structures can affect the interests of these units and ultimately shape their behavior. Consequently, Waltz's theory is best understood as a structural theory of international relations and emphasizing how systemic factors dictate the dynamics between states and other actors in the international sphere.

3- Discussion

The research data reveals that the defense-security cooperation between Iran and Russia presents both positive and negative implications for the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Positive aspects of the cooperation are: increasing Iran's military capability, elevating Iran's deterrence posture, convergence Against the threat of NATO expansion to the east, promoting convergence between the two countries in the process of power transfer from West to East during the evolving international system, increasing capability to mitigate the impacts of sanctions.

the Negative aspects of the cooperation are: intensification of the threat perception of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a threat to the international peace and security (increasing the level of Iran's threat in the international system), empowerment of NATO Partners which may lead to more effective containment strategies against Iran, preparation of the ground for the intensification of economic sanctions against Iran, deepening of the domestic gap between the nation and the sovereignty due to the historical pessimism regarding Russian actions, and finally the negative impact on scientific and cultural exchanges between Iran and Ukraine. Generally, while the defense-security cooperation between Iran and Russia offers several strategic advantages, it also poses significant challenges and risks that could affect Iran's standing both regionally and globally.

4- Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, this research proposes the following strategic insights:

- a. The security and defense cooperation between Iran and Russia can be understood through the lens of structural realism. The characteristics of the international system compel both nations to engage in this collaboration, as they face political, economic, and military pressures from external forces. Consequently, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation must work together across various domains, particularly in defense and security, to ensure their survival within the international system and effectively counter the pressures exerted by Western governments.
- b. A significant positive outcome of this cooperation, as suggested by structural realism, is the enhancement of Iran's deterrence capabilities and the preservation of its cross-border power, which are critical for the Islamic Republic's survival in the global order. By aligning with a major power like Russia—one that possesses considerable political and military resources—Iran aims to mitigate potential threats from the West, particularly from the United States.
- c. However, the realities highlighted by structural realism indicate that the activism of peripheral or semi-peripheral states in center of international system can lead to significant and

potentially irreparable consequences for these political units, with the Islamic Republic of Iran being no exception. One of the most critical negative effects stemming from this dynamic is the securitization of Iran as a perceived threat to the global order. This perception, particularly in conjunction with its partnership with Russia, positions Iran as a potential target for coordinated political and economic actions from major powers. As a result, it is imperative for the Islamic Republic of Iran to engage in more nuanced and strategic calculations regarding its actions in the anarchic global arena.

d. Regarding the war in Ukraine, the Islamic Republic of Iran has faced accusations of arms cooperation. Europe and the United States seem more focused on portraying Iran negatively in international forums and shaping global public opinion than addressing the issue itself. These accusations could have detrimental effects on Iran in various areas. In light of this, it is essential for governing institutions—particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which manages the country's foreign relations—to implement a series of measures to counter hostile policies against Iran. This includes efforts to neutralize the West's narrative that presents Iran as a threat to international peace and security. To achieve this, the Ministry should engage in official diplomacy by opening negotiations and dialogue with the European Union and other countries, while addressing ambiguities based on the principle of good faith. Additionally, public diplomacy is essential, which involves communicating with international public opinion to clarify unproven accusations against Iran. Moreover, it is important to respond to the pro-Western Ukrainian government by leveraging media capabilities to challenge its recent accusations against the Islamic Republic. Pursuing these unproven claims through legal channels is also necessary. Domestically, using persuasive and enlightening tools can help inform public opinion about the government's policies toward Russia and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

5- References

- Abdollahkhani, A. (2019). *Theories of Security*. Tehran, Abrar Contemporary Cultural Institute of International Studies and Research, Tehran, 6th edition. [In Persian]
- Ahmadi, H. (1998). Structuralism in International Relations Theory: From Wallerstein to Waltz. *Journal of Faculty of Law and Political Science*, No. (37). [In Persian]
- Alamdar, I., Kolayi, E. (2022). geopolitical analysis of Iran-Russia relations after the Islamic revolution with emphasis on Morgenth's power theory. *Political Geography Quarterly*, 7(1)165-140. [In Persian]
- Asadi, B., Monavari, S.A. (2021). Investigation of Iran-Russia Relations in the New Century: Strategic Alliance or Convergence of Interests. *Political and International Approaches Journal*, 12(4). [In Persian]
- Bigdeli, M.R., Dehghani Firouzabadi, S.J., Barzegar, K. (2023). Comparison of the approach of three generations of realism paradigm towards the international system. *International Relations Research Quarterly*, 13(48). [In Persian]
- Deheshyar, H. (2014). The origins of the confrontation between America and Russia in the Ukraine crisis. *World Politics Quarterly*, 3(2). [In Persian]
- Dehghani Firouzabadi, S.J. (2014). *Theory and meta-theory*. Tehran, Samt Publications. [In Persian]
- Divsalar, M., Khan-Mohammadi, A.A. (2014). The Security Impact of NATO's Geographical Expansion on the National Security and Defense Functions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Military Sciences and Techniques Quarterly*, 11(31). [In Persian]
- EU extends sanctions on Iran over its "support" to Russia's war in Ukraine, armed groups in the Middle East, Red Sea <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/russia-ukraine-war/eu-extends-sanctions-on-iran-over-its-support-to-russia-s-war-in-ukraine-armed-groups-in-mideast-red-sea/3276000>
- Fallahi, E., Ameri, A. (2015). the roots of the crisis in Ukraine and its impact on the national interests of J.A. Iran. *International Relations Studies Quarterly*, 9(34), 65-92. [In Persian]
- Fathi, F. (2019). criticism of structural realism with a focus on foreign policy and structural realism. *New Approaches in Islamic Studies Quarterly*, (4). [In Persian]
- Gallagher, N., Mohseni, E., Ramsay, C. (2022). Iranian Public Opinion on the War in Ukraine and Nuclear Options. *Center for International & Security Studies at Maryland*, Available at: <https://cisssm.umd.edu/research-impact/publications/iranian-publicopinion-war-ukraine-and-nuclear-options>.
- Ghasemi, F. (2013). *Principles of International Relations*. Tehran, Mizan Legal Foundation Publications. [In Persian]
- Holmquist, E., Khan, I. (2024). Isolated together Russian-Iranian Military Cooperation, Swedish Defence Research Agency www.foi.se SE-164 90 Stockholm.
- Hoshang Mahdavi, A. (1994). *Iran's foreign policy during the Pahlavi era*. Tehran, Alborz Publishing. [In Persian]
- Hurrell, A. (2007). One world? Many Worlds? The Place of Regions in the Study of International Society. *International Affairs*, 83:1.
- Iras Institute. (2012). *Ukrainian Society and Culture*. Tehran, Organization of Islamic Culture and Communication. [In Persian]
- Jamal Zadeh, M.A. (1993). *History of Iranian-Russian Relations*. Tehran, Dr. Mahmoud Afshar Endowment Foundation. [In Persian]
- John J.M. (2014). Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. *The Foreign Affairs*, Published on August 18.
- Justin Bronk, N.R., Jack, W. (2022). The Russian Air War and Ukrainian Requirements for Air Defence. *Royal United Services Institute*. 2022-11-07, 32–33, The Russian Air War and Ukrainian Requirements for Air Defence | Royal United Services Institute (rusi.org).

Crisis Studies of the Islamic World

- Katz, M.N. (2012). Russia and Iran. *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 3, pp.54-64.
- Khosrow, S., Ezzati, E. (2017). The effect of military cooperation between Iran and Russia on Iran's regional geopolitical developments. *New Perspectives in Human Geography Quarterly*, 10(3), 75-90 [In Persian]
- Khosrow, S., Sarwar, R., Ezzati, E. (2019). The effect of Iran-Russia defense cooperation on the geopolitical strategy of Iranian energy (with a focus on oil and gas). *Strategic Defense Studies Journal*, 18(79). [In Persian]
- Klympush, I. (2015). Ukraine and Russia: Strategic Partnership vs. Mutual. Dependence. Available at: http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/Studien_zu_ZS-2.pdf, (Accessed on: 14/8/2015).
- Kolayi, E., Abedi, A. (2016). The Ups and Downs of Iran-Russia Relations (1990-2016). *International Relations Research Quarterly*, (4). [In Persian]
- Kolayi, E., Zanganeh, S. (2023). The effect of the war in Ukraine on the relations between Iran and Russia. *Quarterly Journal of Political and International Approaches*, 15(2).
- Kozhanov, N. (2015). Understanding the Revitalization of Russian-Iranian Relations. available at:<http://carnegieendowment.org/files>.
- Maleki, A. (2009). The Evolution of Iran-Russia Relations. *Strategic Studies Journal*, 3(9). [In Persian]
- Mohammadi, N. (2013). *the book of Ukraine, Geographical Organization of Armed Forces*. Tehran, Sabz Publishing. [In Persian]
- Mohammadkhani, A. (2008). Explaining the approach of neo-realism in international relations. *Political Studies*, 1(3). [In Persian]
- Moshir Zadeh, H. (2011). *Evolution in International Relations Theories*. Tehran, Samit Publications. [In Persian]
- Mousavi, S.R. (2017). *military relations between Iran and Russia*. Foreign Relations Quarterly, 19(74). [In Persian]
- Nonejad, M., Karmi, M. (2017). the confrontation between Russia and America in Ukraine and its impact on Iran's national interests. *International Relations Studies Quarterly*, 11(41) 145-175. [In Persian]
- Nouri Asl, A. (2022). the role of Martyr Soleimani in Russia's entry into the Syrian crisis, *bi-monthly American Journalist*, (17), 138. [In Persian]
- Parker, J.W. (2019). Between Russia and Iran: Room to Pursue American Interests in Syria by, National Defense University Press. *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, No. 27
- Pasandideh, S. (2014). Security Cooperation between Iran and Russia: Fields and Prospects. *Strategic Studies*, 1(63). [In Persian]
- Rumi, F., Al-Sayed Ghafoor, S.M. (2023) Foreign Policy Approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ukraine War, Achievements and Challenges. *International Relations Research Quarterly*, 13(3).
- Sadeghi, S.S. (2008). an introduction to the causes of xenophobia and xenophobia in contemporary Iranian political culture. *Journal of Political Science*, 4(16). [In Persian]
- Salehi, H., Sajjadi, M.S. (2022). Foreign Policy Positions and Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Ukraine Crisis (February 24, 2022). *Crisis and Emergency Management Quarterly*, 14(3). [In Persian]
- Seifzadeh, S.H. (2012). *theorizing in international relations; Fundamentals and intellectual forms*. Tehran, Samit Publications, third edition. [In Persian]
- Shaw, M., Timothy, C., Andrew, F., Antkiewicz, A. (2007). Globaland/or Regional Development at the Start of the 21st Century? China, India and (South) Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, 28:7.

Evaluating the Obstacles and Limitations of the United Nations Action in the Syrian Crisis within the framework of the Doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect