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## IRAN AND RUSSIA IN CENTRAL EURASIA: REGIONAL COOPERATION AND ITS PROBLEMS

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**Abstract.** This article written with the aim of discuss about the regional cooperation between Iran and Russia in Central Eurasia and some of its problems. The main question of the article is about how Russia and Iran manage regional affairs, and the author's main idea is that the two countries have tried to maintain stability and security in the region, expand economic relations, and strengthen transportation and logistics infrastructure in the past three decades. To deepen and expand regional cooperation, they have formed structures such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the North-South Corridor, and the Caspian Sea Legal Convention. These institutions have been able to play a major role in strengthening these cooperations. Despite this, in cases such as the Caucasus crisis, no specific format has yet been established to solve the problems, and this issue can harm the regional relations of the two countries. The main finding of this article is that ignoring sensitive interests in the South Caucasus region can face unforeseen threats to stability and security in Central Eurasia.

**Keywords:** Central Eurasia, Iran, Russia, SCO, EAEU, INSTC

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Научная статья. Политические науки

## ИРАН И РОССИЯ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ ЕВРАЗИИ: РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО И ПРОБЛЕМЫ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ

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**Аннотация.** Цель данной статьи – рассмотреть вопросы регионального сотрудничества между Ираном и Россией в Центральной Евразии и некоторые возникающие между ними проблемы. Главный вопрос, который ставит автор статьи – как Россия и Иран управляют региональными делами, и основная идея – обосновать свое утверждение о том, что в последние три десятилетия две страны пытались поддерживать стабильность и безопасность в регионе, расширять экономические отношения и укреплять транспортно-логистическую инфраструктуру. Для углубления и расширения регионального сотруд-



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ничества были созданы такие структуры, как Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, Евразийский экономический союз, коридор «Север–Юг» и Каспийская правовая конвенция. Эти институты смогли сыграть важную роль в укреплении сотрудничества России и Ирана в регионе. Несмотря на это, в таких случаях, как кавказский кризис, до сих пор не создан конкретный формат для решения проблем в этом субрегионе, и его отсутствие может нанести ущерб региональным отношениям двух стран. Главный вывод данной статьи заключается в том, что игнорирование чувствительных интересов друг друга в регионе Южного Кавказа может обернуться непредвиденными угрозами для стабильности и безопасности в Центральной Евразии.

**Ключевые слова:** Центральная Евразия, Иран, Россия, ШОС, ЕАЭС, МТК «Север–Юг»

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## Introduction

Iran and Russia have had important cooperation with each other in the last three decades in Central Eurasia. These cooperations have been very important for the stability and security of the region and avoiding the pressures of Western powers and institutions due to the common interests that existed at the regional level. From Afghanistan to Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and the South Caucasus, there has been a belt of security, logistics and competition issues that Tehran and Moscow have tried to manage through effective interaction and within the framework of common interests with each other and with the countries of the region. But despite this common interest and cooperation, in some cases they had conflicting interests, and this issue has caused concerns in recent years, especially in Tehran. Therefore, the main topic in this article is that in recent years, despite more interactions between the two countries in the region, important problems and challenges have arisen, such as the dispute over the Zangzor-Sionik corridor.

Therefore, without finding a common and effective solution to solve such problems in the region, there is a possibility of the crisis spreading to other Eurasian regions. Based on this issue, various questions are raised about the continuation of regional cooperation between Russia and Tehran, including how the two countries have cooperated with each other so far? What structures and institutions have they created to continue and expand cooperation? What is the future perspective of these collaborations? And what issues and problems may challenge the continuation of these collaborations? But the main question in this article is how can Russia and Iran manage common issues in the Eurasian region?



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The hypothesis that can be put forward here is that Tehran and Moscow need a common format for interaction in the areas of dispute in the region, and this format can focus on the Caucasus, to have long-term dialogues in this advance the relationship. In fact, along with institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Caspian Sea Legal Convention and the North-South Corridor, Tehran and Moscow also need a plan for interaction regarding the South Caucasus. Two countries have had important cooperation on the issue of Central Eurasia and it is necessary to reach a specific format to promote this cooperation with the aim of stability, security, development and integration in this region. Currently, this format exists for Central Asia and the North-South Corridor, but it is still weak for the Caucasus.

In this article, the focus will be on the cooperation between Moscow and Tehran in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea area, and issues outside of these three areas, such as the Ukraine crisis, will not be considered by the author. To review my main idea, I will first present the most important Eurasian affairs in the last three decades. Then, I pay attention to the discussion about cooperation between Russia and Iran in regional issues based on chronological order. In the next discussion, we will discuss the differences between the interests of Tehran and Moscow, and at the end, we will analyze and summarize the discussions.

### ***Important Affairs in Central Eurasia***

In the Central Eurasia region in recent decades, there have been important issues and problems in the fields of security, transportation, energy, development and institutionalism, and first I discuss the most important ones.

Since the beginning of the independence of the Central Eurasian countries until now, there have been important security problems arising from intervention of western powers, new regional government disputes, ethnic issues within the countries, threats arising from terrorism, radicalism and separatism, and the expansion of Western institutions and arrangements with the aim of putting pressure on Russia and preventing other interactions between other countries. These issues have led to many crises in the region and have formed an important global geopolitical fault in this area between Russia and the West. Also, wars such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Tajik civil war, war in Georgia and Ukraine have been the results of these security problems. [Karami, Karimian, 2018, Pp. 41–42.]

One of the other issues in the region is the state of development in political, economic, cultural and social dimensions. The transformation from a centralized and state-oriented system to a new situation has been full of tension and problems since the independence of the countries of the region. Some countries have had success in this field. But most of them still haven't been

able to solve the problems related to economic and political development and modernization [Karami, Karimian, 2018, Pp. 41–42]. In this framework, the issue of state building and nation building sometimes in extreme ways has increased tension and conflict in the region. We should also mention the issue of the efficiency of the governments in providing the general needs of the people, which in some cases has led to an increase in tension and crisis within the countries.

The issue of logistics and transportation in the Central Eurasian region, especially in landlocked countries, during the past three decades, has drawn attention to numerous transportation corridor plans. In this framework, important agreements have been made on corridors such as Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA), International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Belt-Road Initiative (BRI) and The Middle Corridor or TITR (Trans-Caspian International Transport Route). Also, the competition over energy transfer routes from regional countries to world markets started in the early 1990s, and Western countries, China and Iran tried to transfer regional energy from their desired routes.

But another important issue in Central Eurasia has been the issue of regional integration and institutionalism. Russia tried to form three important political, security and economic institutions from the beginning of the independence of these countries. But Western countries have tried to compete with Russia by expanding Western regional institutions to Eurasian countries. In this regard, we can mention the expansion of NATO and the European Union. Currently, there are many organizations operating in the region, and sometimes their activities have led to conflict and war.

Russia has tried to keep the region under the control of its own regional organizations. Until 2014, this policy was to maintain exclusive influence in the region, but after that, it followed a more open policy under the name of »Greater Eurasia«. Greater Eurasia is a geopolitical concept obtaining cultural-geographical and political-economic features. «Greater Eurasia» is a continent-wide geopolitical vision, promoting the political and economic cooperation between states and nations from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. It is bordered in the East, West, North, and South by the four oceans – the Arctic, Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian [Glaser, Thomann, 2021].

Vladimir Putin announced the Russian government's desire for a greater Eurasian partnership at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in June 2016. In the opening speech, Putin proposed «considering the prospects for more extensive Eurasian partnership involving the Eurasian Economic Union,» in which countries such as China, Pakistan, Iran, and India would also be included. Since then, Putin has consistently promoted the project in his addresses to the Federal Assembly, in meetings with foreign leaders, at subsequent St.

Petersburg Economic Forums, and at the Eastern Economic Forums held in Vladivostok<sup>1</sup>.

Since the beginning of the independence of the countries of the region, Iran has tried to regulate relations with these countries with a pragmatic policy. The major part of this pragmatism was carried out since Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidential construction policy in the early 1990s and has continued until today. Like Russia, Iran has been concerned about the influence and presence of Western powers and organizations. This concern has led to the formation of spheres of common interest for the two countries and they have cooperated widely in this framework. Therefore, since 1991, the two countries have been more concerned about two issues in Central Asia and the Caucasus: the expansion of the influence of Western governments and institutions and the expansion of extremism and terrorism.

### ***Eurasian cooperation between Iran and Russia***

During the past three decades, Iran and Russia have had important cooperation for peace, stability and economic development in the Eurasian region, and this cooperation has been an important factor in preventing insecurity in the region. The most important cooperation between Tehran and Moscow in this field should be considered the efforts for peace in Tajikistan in the years 1992 to 1996 and the security cooperation in support of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan in the years 1996 to 2001. Also, since 1992, Iran and Russia have discussed with each other to ensure peace and cooperation in the Caspian Basin as a common sea in various meetings with the cooperation of the coastal countries of the Caspian Sea and concluded important agreements in the fields of fisheries, shipping, environment and security of the Caspian Sea. The legal convention of the Caspian Sea in 2018 was one of the results of these negotiations.

One of the major problems Tehran and Moscow faced in the political, security and even economic fields between 1991 and 2012 was the lack of permanent institutional cooperation mechanisms. Since 2012, when new relations were gradually formed, Tehran and Moscow tried to institutionalize their interactions. However, this effort should be seen in the context of declining cooperation between Russia and the West, and especially under the influence of the Ukraine crisis in 2014, which was reflected in the «Greater Eurasia» initiative in 2016.

Russia's grand strategy to maintain and strengthen the Eurasian region's ties in the post-Soviet space through regional institutionalization, embodied in

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<sup>1</sup> Köstem, S. Russia's Search for a Greater Eurasia: Origins, Promises, and Prospects // Wilson Center, No. 40, 2029, URL: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no-40-russias-search-for-greater-eurasia-origins-promises-and-prospects>. (assessed: 28.07.2024).

three institutions – the «Commonwealth of Independent States,» the «Collective Security Treaty Organization,» and the «Eurasian Economic Union. The center of gravity of this Russian institutionalism was the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union, which faced a major challenge since 2014 due to the Ukraine crisis. In fact, without Ukraine's participation in the Eurasian Economic Union, this institution was not effective for Russia. Consequently, on June 16, 2016, Putin announced the «Greater Eurasia» initiative aimed at further cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and regional countries like Iran, Turkey, and China. Earlier, in 2015, Putin had referred to Eurasia as a geopolitical chessboard or our peaceful and prosperous home [Sukhankin, 2018]. Therefore, it seems that the Greater Eurasia initiative envisions a great power alliance with Asian partners to create a continental system independent of the United States, while also offering opportunities for European participation<sup>2</sup>.

Indeed, the goal of the Greater Eurasia project extends beyond Russia's traditional Eurasian domain, or the Soviet Union's territory, and focuses on joint projects, increasing regional participation, and expanding official partners of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to South Asia and the Persian Gulf. Considering the deteriorating dimensions of Western sanctions on Russia since the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the scope of economic cooperation, aimed at regional economic development, will seriously increase. Thus, within the framework of its new eastern policy, Russia has signed large energy contracts with China and focused on the development of the Far East with Chinese participation. In fact, Greater Eurasia has many capabilities and advantages. From a geopolitical perspective, this plan can stabilize Russia's western front in the short term. From a geo-economic perspective, it aligns with the interests of China and Russia and has a solid practical foundation<sup>3</sup>. Russia seeks to shape a new pole of power to facilitate the transition to a balanced multipolar system but needs the cooperation of other global and regional powers due to the lack of material and ideological capacities for such a mechanism.[Niakoui, Safari, 2019].

The expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with the membership of India, Pakistan, and Iran is another important development in the Eurasian region. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, established in 2001 based on the Shanghai-5 meeting, became a new organization that included China, Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Later, in

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<sup>2</sup> Bordachev, T. Greater Eurasia: What Is Yet to Be Done? // Valdai Discussion Club. URL: <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/greater-eurasia-what-is-yet-to-be-done> (accessed: 04.05.2024).

<sup>3</sup> Yiwei, W., Duan M. Is Greater Eurasia Possible Without Europe: A Security Perspective? // Valdai Discussion Club. URL: <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/is-greater-eurasia-possible-without-europe>. (accessed: 04.05.2024).

2018, India and Pakistan joined, and on September 17, 2022, Iran was also admitted as a member. It covers about one-third of the world's land area and a quarter of the global GDP. The mission and activities of this organization are focused on Central Asia, and its main goal is to support peace, security, and economic cooperation. In the region, however, this organization has not yet managed to become an important and effective regional integration institution, but the membership of Russia, China, India, and Iran indicates significant eastern cooperation in combating terror, extremism, and separatism [Karami, 2023].

The Eurasian Economic Union was formed with the aim of regional integration of Eurasian countries and in a long process, and its agreement was finalized in 2014. Iran signed a preferential trade agreement with this organization in 2018 and reached a free trade agreement with the organization's members in 2023. Iran's ambassador to Russia announced in early 2024 that Tehran's official request for membership in the Eurasian Economic Union had been submitted to the union authority<sup>4</sup>.

Since the beginning of the Ukrainian war, the North-South Corridor has been activated. In the North-South Corridor, the activities have become much more serious, and with the completion of the final phase of the Rasht-Astara railway, a rail connection will be established from Russia to Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf. Since the strategic role that the INSTC plays in the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard, Iran has adopted a strategy aimed at exploiting the benefit of this logistic project and promoting national companies such as the IRISL Group. At the ECO Summit in Tashkent on November 9th, 2023, Kazakhstan, Russia, Iran, and Turkmenistan collaborated on advancing a roadmap for the development of the INSTC. This plan outlines an increase in the logistics route's capacity to 15 million tons by the year 2027. Iran's strategy within the INSTC involves a multi-faceted approach concentrated on fostering investment, enhancing infrastructure, and optimizing transport logistics<sup>5</sup>.

With the change of president in Iran from the first half of 2024, the process of cooperation between Iran and Russia will continue within the framework of regional organizations. In the meeting between the Iranian and Russian president Putin and the doctors on October 11, 2024 in Ashgabat city, the two presidents emphasized the continuation of cooperation between the two countries and considered these relations as strategic<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Examining Iran's Observer Membership in the Agenda of the Economic Forum of the Eurasian Union // IRNA News Agency. URL: <https://www.irna.ir/news/85542248> (assessed: 21.04.2024).

<sup>5</sup> Iran and the IRISL Group's Crucial Role in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) // SpecialEurasia – Geopolitical Intelligence & Risk Assessment. URL: <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/11/30/iran-irisl-group-instc> (assessed: 19.08.2024).

<sup>6</sup> President Pezeshkian terms Tehran-Moscow ties as strategic // IRNA News Agency. URL: <https://en.irna.ir/news/85624559/President-Pezeshkian-terms-Tehran-Moscow-ties-as-strategic> (assessed: 11.09.2024).



Therefore, the set of developments in the Eurasian region, especially from 2014 to today, has led to a new approach in Russia, which has resulted in the membership of countries like Iran in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a preferential trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union from, and a free trade agreement. Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has strengthened the possibilities for the two countries to play a role in establishing and maintaining regional peace and security. This is particularly significant given Iran's constructive role in the Eurasian domain over the past decades.

### ***Some Problems in Regional Cooperation***

The common interests of Moscow and Tehran in a wide territory from Afghanistan to Central Asia, Caspian and South Caucasus have not meant the absence of conflicts and problems in the regional relations of the two countries. Although the two countries have been able to more or less manage these conflicts, in some cases it has had negative effects on the relations between the two countries.

The crisis in the Caucasus is more deep-rooted than any other region in the Eurasian territory, and no clear solution has yet been found for it. In the Caucasus, Iran has proposed a 3+3 format for the interaction of the three Caucasian countries with Iran, Russia and Turkey. With the non-participation of Georgia in this format, the possibility of advancing regional cooperation remains limited. Iran is concerned about Russia's lack of attention to its interests and issues in the Caucasus and expects a clear understanding of Iran's concerns in the Caucasus on the Russian side.

A general principle in Iran-Russia regional cooperation has been emphasizing regional peace and security and opposing Western, particularly U.S., interference in these areas. This principle also applies to the South Caucasus, but it has rarely led to practical action. Unlike the Syrian crisis and the continuation of its political system, there has been no effective security cooperation between Tehran and Moscow in the South Caucasus since 2020. Even though officials from both sides have met and held discussions on cooperation, these meetings have not resulted in significant practical collaboration. This is especially true regarding the access route of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan with the change of geographical borders and its effect on the border of Iran and Armenia, which has led to tension. Therefore, some analysts in Iran believe that Russia has not considered Iran's geopolitical concerns in dealing with the South Caucasus regional issues and has not assigned any role to Iran in the peace agreement.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi strongly opposed Russia's support for the opening of the Zangezur Corridor in the South Caucasus, calling



any redrawing of borders a «red line» for Iran. Araghchi posted on X, stating, «Any threat from the North, South, East, or West to the territorial integrity of our neighbors or redrawing of boundaries is totally unacceptable and a red line for Iran.» His reaction follows recent discussions between Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and Russian President Vladimir Putin regarding the establishment of a transport corridor, known as the Zangezur Corridor, which would link Azerbaijan's western regions to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic<sup>7</sup>.

It seems that Russia's need to maintain economic ties and transit options with Azerbaijan and Turkey after the Ukraine war has led to certain flexibilities from Moscow regarding developments in the South Caucasus, which are not in Iran's favor. According to Kaleji's viewpoint, the different attitudes and approaches of Iran and Russia towards the tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan are indicative of their increasingly diverging positions in the South Caucasus, compared to their largely shared approaches before the Second Karabakh war. The close relations between Russia and Israel, as well as Russia's economic relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey, have forced Moscow to take a flexible approach in the South Caucasus, to Tehran's detriment. Indeed, the 3+3 format has become very weak after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the escalation of tensions between Iran and Azerbaijan. This process has placed Iran in a security and strategic dilemma along its northwestern borders<sup>8</sup>.

Clause five of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia states: «To more effectively monitor the implementation of the agreements, a peace center for monitoring the ceasefire will be established.» Turkey joined the ceasefire monitoring center in «Aghdam,» but Iran did not participate. Although Turkey was not mentioned in the agreement, a memorandum of understanding resulted in a joint center between Turkey and Russia. While Iran and its northwestern borders were deeply affected by the war's outcome, Iran was not invited to join this center, indicating Russia's willingness to overlook Iran's interests in this matter. Over the past three years, it appears that Russia has increasingly ignored Iran's geopolitical concerns in the South Caucasus. When tensions between Tehran and Baku peaked in September and October 2021, Iran sought Moscow's cooperation against geopolitical threats in the South Caucasus. However, during a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Octo-

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<sup>7</sup> Mahamad A. Zangezur Corridor: Russia and Iran in Conflict over Caucasus Link // IranWire. 09.09.2024. URL: <https://iranwire.com/en/politics/133729-zangezur-corridor-russia-and-iran-in-conflict-over-caucasus-link>. (assessed: 17/08.2024).

<sup>8</sup> Kaleji V. Russia and Iran Diverge in the South Caucasus // the Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst. URL: <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13758-russia-and-iran-diverge-in-the-south-caucasus.html>. (assessed: 12/05.2024).

ber 6, 2021, in Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov explicitly stated that Moscow opposed Tehran's military exercises along the Azerbaijan border<sup>9</sup>.

Even the meeting of the foreign ministers of Iran, Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia in the 3+3 format, titled «Turn for Peace, Cooperation, and Progress in the South Caucasus,» held in Tehran, failed to align the interests of Iran and Russia. Lavrov's recent statements have also increased Iran's concerns<sup>10</sup>. The Islamic Republic of Iran does not oppose an access route in the region but opposes any change in the geopolitical status of the region's borders and considers it a threat to its national security. For instance, in a meeting with the Turkish President in 2022, Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, expressed satisfaction with the return of Karabakh to Azerbaijan and stated, «If there is a policy to block the Iran-Armenia border, the Islamic Republic will oppose it because this border is a communication route that has existed for thousands of years.» He also said in a meeting with the Russian President, «The Islamic Republic will never tolerate policies and plans that lead to the closure of the Iran-Armenia border.»<sup>11</sup>

Ignoring Iran's regional interests by Russia has led to severe criticism from Iranian public opinion, perceiving it as a betrayal of mutual trust, putting significant social and political pressure on the political system. It seems such issues should be resolved with Iran's presence and participation; the absence of Iran limits the possibility of resolution and severely impacts the nature and stability of bilateral relations. This policy of Russia or the signing of statements with the countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council about the Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf will cause the Iranian people as well as some statesmen to worry about Russia's foreign behavior and will not create social capital for this country in Iran.

## Conclusion

From all the discussions in this article, it can be seen that Central Eurasia with stability, security and development will not be possible without the effective cooperation of Iran and Russia, as well as these two countries with other countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus. In practice, the two countries have

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<sup>9</sup> Kaleji V. Russia and Iran Diverge in the South Caucasus // the Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst. URL: <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13758-russia-and-iran-diverge-in-the-south-caucasus.html>. (assessed:20.08.2024).

<sup>10</sup> Objectives of the 3+3 meeting in Tehran // IPIS. 12.06.2024. URL: <https://www.ipis.ir/portal/subjectview/732464>. (assessed:20.08.2024). На перс. яз.

<sup>11</sup> Why is Iran clearly against collapsing the geographical boundaries of the Caucasus region? // [ОФИЦИАЛЬНЫЙ САЙТ ВЕЛИКОГО ЛИДЕРА ИСЛАМСКОЙ РЕВОЛЮЦИИ ЕГО СВЕЛЛОСТИ АЯТОЛЛЫ ХАМЕНИИ]. URL: <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=50682> (assessed: 13.05.2024). На перс. яз.

had important cooperation with each other in various issues during the past 34 years. These cooperations in a wide range of territories from Afghanistan to Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and the South Caucasus have been of great importance for regional stability and security as well as the establishment of logistics and transportation. Institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, with the presence of two countries, Iran and Russia, and other partners, as well as the growing cooperation between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union, have created a clear vision of Moscow-Tehran relations at the level of the larger Eurasian region. The activity of the North-South Corridor in recent years has created a wide cooperation space from Eurasia to the Persian Gulf and South Asia.

With the inauguration of a reformist president in Iran, the prospects of these relations are still bright and increasing. This issue has been repeatedly emphasized by the new president of Iran and the president of Russia. But Tehran and Moscow need an effective format for cooperation in the field of Caucasus issues, and without this format, the possibility of damaging the relations between the two countries is high. Iran's public opinion as well as reformist groups can put a lot of pressure on the government in the absence of a Caucasian cooperation and ignoring Iran's geopolitical interests in this region, and naturally this issue will make the conditions for the continuation of cooperation more difficult. Although the change in the situation of the South Caucasus may be less problematic for Russia in the short term, in the long term, this issue will also face extensive challenges to the regional situation and Russia's geopolitical interests, and considering the possibility of problems spreading to the Caspian Sea, It will also threaten regional security in Central Asia.

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