

## **Iran's Position in Russian Foreign Policy by Emphasizing Neo-Eurasianism**

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### **Abstract**

In recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has found a special place in the discourse of Russian foreign policy. Part of this importance can be traced back to the influence of the discourse of fourth political theory which has become the dominant approach in Russia and has made a significant impact in the last three decades on the Kremlin policies. The founder of this theory is the Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin who called it "neo-Eurasianism". Proponents of the aforementioned approach believe that Moscow, with a new foreign policy outlook, must move part of its strategy from the West to the East, looking for new allies in the East, including Iran. Iran and Russia have described each other as "strategic allies." This statement has been made many times by some of the elites of both countries, particularly by Putin himself and Iran's supreme leader. Hence, the main question of the article follows that: Given the centrality of neo-Eurasianism in the last two decades in Russia's foreign policy, what position does the Islamic Republic of Iran occupy in this approach? To answer this question, the hypothesis is raised that two countries regard each other's positions realistically (considering American transition to unilateralism), while in the context of neo-Eurasianism Iran has found a special place. Therefore, the findings of the article indicate that Neo-Eurasianism plays a clear role in Russia's foreign policy; consequently, Iran has a special place in this approach.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were significant changes in the geopolitical and geostrategic conditions of the two countries, Iran and Russia. This has led to political-security intricacies in the region as a result of the presence and influence of trans-regional powers. In the meantime, two important events have highlighted the recognition of Russian foreign policy in Iran's research and education system. The "strategic analysis" of foreign

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policy has thus gained in importance due to the following factors: first, the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution and, consequently, the need for historical revision of the friends and foes of the Islamic Revolution; second, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Russian Federation as a new actor transcending the culture of Marxism and restoring its history and destiny.

Meanwhile, the failures of Atlanticism in Russian foreign policy on the one hand, and Vladimir Putin's coming to power in 2000, on the other hand, have led to many changes in its foreign policy practices. The question of Russia's return to world hegemony has been dealt with by a new approach called "Eurasianism" and "Neo-Eurasianism". Proponents of this approach argue that Russia, due to its particular territorial character and geographical spread across the two continents of Europe and Asia, should pursue a balanced policy against the East and the West, ensuring that Moscow's economic and security interests are met. Alexander Dugin is the founder of the Fourth Political Theory calling it a theory of Neo-Eurasianism, in which the position of countries has changed in proportion to their importance, including Iran.

Dugin never restricted himself to writing philosophical-political texts; he along with Eduard Limonov formed the Bolshevik National Party after the October 1993 uprising. The party included a variety of intellectuals who were offended by what they saw as support for Yeltsin on the streets. They believed whether, eventually Russia would regain its lost popular support or the Soviet Union would be rebuilt in a new form. The key question, then, is as follows: what effect does the adoption of the Neo-Eurasist approach have on the Kremlin's policies in the face of its southern neighbor, i.e., Iran? In response to this question, the hypothesis is raised that by the domination of Dogan's Neo-Eurasianism in Russian foreign policy, the two countries can benefit from each other's relative strength in the new conditions created by the US transition to unilateralism and Eastward orientation, while being cautious during the transition, and can pass the situation with the least cost.

Theoretical Framework of this study is based on Alexander Dugin's theory of Neo-Eurasianism (The Fourth Political Theory). The premise of the fourth theory of politics is considered to be at odds with post-liberalism as a general practice as well as globalization, post-modernity, the "end of history", the current situation and the algebraic expansion of fundamentalist currents at the beginning of the 21st century. The Fourth Political Theory is the "Crusades" against Postmodern, post-industrial society; formations out of the function of the thought of liberalism; globalism and its logistical and technological foundations.

Overall, **the** findings of the present study suggest that it is difficult to accurately explain Russia's foreign policy due to multiple stimuli and diverse discourses. However, one can analyze Russia's foreign policy towards Iran from the perspective of Neo-Eurasianism as Russia has witnessed significant changes in its foreign policy discourse over the past few decades. Despite all these changes, however, the country has gradually gained relative stability at the level of discourse since Yeltsin's resignation and Putin's ascendance to power which has played an important role in the type of Russia's foreign relations. As Putin came to power, many of the characteristics and methods of domestic and foreign policy changed. He succeeded in freeing Russia from the harsh economic, political, social, and security impulses and in giving it a unified identity in its domestic and foreign policy. Among these attitudinal changes was Putin's Eastward-looking policy, which he strongly seeks to promote relations, particularly strategic relations with some neighboring countries, for its strategic interests in the region. Moscow is aware of the geopolitical depth, as well as Iran's cultural influence in the region, knowing that solving problems in the West Asian region is impossible without Iran's cooperation. Dugin correctly demonstrates that the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to the process of reform of the international system, in a way that unity has been created among countries once thought to be irreconcilable. An important example could be Russia's alliance with Iran, which Dugin and many of Russia's political elites see as an important strategy of Russia's geopolitical politics. Dugin's approach to Iran clearly shows that Russian political elites are willing to use relations with Iran to limit the US geopolitical position in the region.

However, despite the geopolitical, economic, military, strategic and even cultural interests and commonalities between the two countries, if we want to separate the alliance formation in Russia from this debate, there is still no cut and clear strategy from the two sides. Part of this instability and incoherence must be sought in the absence of sufficient consensus among the various elites of the two countries. In this regard, it is possible to examine the attitude of the elites of the two countries of Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The presence of two completely different political spectrums in the political system of the two countries has made it difficult for a strategic and even tactical cooperation breakthrough. There are Groups called Western and orientalist in both countries, which are often in the opposing positions, and they greatly influence the decision-making and policy-making of the diplomatic system. Likewise, there are some scholars and politicians in Iran, influential on public opinion, who assess current

conditions and partnerships as well as Putin's pragmatic policy in line with memories and former excesses of Russia.

**Keywords:** Alexander Dugin, Islamic Republic of Iran, Neo-Eurasianism, Russia, Russian Foreign Policy.