

Russia-Iran Strategic Partnership: Forging New Avenues in Geopolitics

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



On January 17, 2025, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed a 20-year “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty”¹ in Moscow, marking a significant deepening of the relationship between the two countries. This Treaty encompasses cooperation across various domains -- including defence, energy, trade, and culture, reflecting a mutual commitment to strengthening ties amidst shared geopolitical challenges.²

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized the significant role of Iran and Russia in shaping a new global order. He described the Iran-Russia Treaty not merely as a political document, but as a roadmap for the future.³ President Vladimir Putin underscored the strategic importance of the Treaty, stating: "This Treaty marks a new chapter in our relations, ensuring long-term cooperation across all key sectors and fortifying our collective resilience against external pressures." Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also emphasized that the Treaty aligns with Moscow's broader vision for a multipolar world, where sovereign countries collaborate without interference from Western powers.

¹ “Russia and Iran presidents sign partnership treaty in Moscow,” *Al Jazeera*, January 17, 2025.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/17/russia-and-iran-presidents-sign-partnership-treaty-in-moscow>

² “Russia, Iran Sign Strategic Partnership Treaty in Moscow,” *AP News*, January 17, 2025,
<https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-iran-pezeshkian-treaty-partnership-71a20990373851741d1fe76a81699036>

³ “Iran's Strategic Pivot Deepens Ties with Russia,” *DW News*, January 17, 2025,
<https://www.dw.com/en/irans-strategic-pivot-deepens-ties-with-russia/a-71325808>

He added: "Russia and Iran are working together to develop a framework that prioritizes mutual respect, economic sovereignty, and regional stability."⁴

The Treaty comprises 47 articles detailing collaboration in myriad domains:

- **Defence and Security:** The Treaty emphasizes enhanced military cooperation, including joint exercises, training programs, and intelligence-sharing to address common threats. Notably, while it fosters military collaboration, the Treaty does not establish a formal military alliance or obligate mutual defence commitments. It also commits both parties to refrain from supporting aggressors, underscoring that if one country faces external aggression, the other will not aid the aggressor. Furthermore, it establishes a mechanism for consultations on shared military and regional security threats.⁵
- **Energy Cooperation:** Both countries have committed to strengthening partnership in the energy sector. Plans include the development of oil and gas projects, as well as collaboration on use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. A significant aspect is the proposal to construct a gas pipeline capable of transporting up to 55 billion cubic meters of gas annually from Russia to Iran. Additionally, the Treaty emphasizes long-term cooperation in the development of nuclear energy, including the construction of nuclear power facilities.⁶
- **Trade and Economic Relations:** The Treaty aims to boost trade by creating transport corridors and facilitating gas shipments between Russia, Iran, and Azerbaijan. Additionally, both countries plan to coordinate responses to Western sanctions and avoid aiding aggressors attacking one another. To mitigate the impact of unilateral coercive measures, the Treaty promotes independent financial systems, including a transition to bilateral payments in national currencies and enhanced direct interbank cooperation.⁷

⁴ "Putin, Lavrov Highlight Russia-Iran Strategic Agreement," *Reuters*, January 17, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-lavrov-russia-iran-strategic-agreement-2025-01-17/>

⁵ "Russia-Iran Defense Cooperation Strengthens under New Treaty," *Financial Times*, January 17, 2025, <https://www.ft.com/content/7df44e1b-be13-4662-8b78-1f6c7f35d518>

⁶ "Russia, Iran Discussing Supply of Russian Gas, Putin Says," *Reuters*, January 17, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russia-iran-discussing-supply-russian-gas-putin-says-2025-01-17/>

⁷ Russia, Iran Sign Strategic Partnership Treaty in Moscow." *AP News*, January 17, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/71a20990373851741d1fe76a81699036>

- **Intelligence and Security Collaboration:** Both countries will exchange information and expertise between their intelligence agencies to strengthen national security and counter shared threats within the framework of separate agreements.⁸
- **Caspian Sea Security:** Recognizing external involvement in the Caspian region as a threat to national interests, the Treaty commits both countries to ensuring that the Caspian Sea remains a region of peace, good-neighborliness, and friendship. This includes preventing military forces from non-coastal states from establishing a presence in the region.
- **Cultural and Scientific Collaboration:** The Treaty seeks to deepen ties in science, education, and culture, promoting exchanges and joint initiatives to strengthen people-to-people connections and mutual understanding. It also aims to foster media collaboration to raise public awareness and counter misinformation.

Iran's *Look East* policy is a strategic realignment that prioritizes deeper ties with Asian powers such as China, Russia, and India, in response to Western sanctions and diplomatic isolation. This policy reflects Tehran's long-term ambition to reduce reliance on Western markets and institutions while strengthening partnerships with Eastern economies that share similar geopolitical and economic challenges. Russia figures prominently in this strategy as a key energy partner, military collaborator, and a counterweight to Western influence. The Iran-Russia partnership is further reinforced by shared interests in circumventing U.S.-led sanctions through alternative trade and financial mechanisms. Iran's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its growing engagement with BRICS, where Russia plays a central role, also align with this *Look East* approach, providing Iran with economic and diplomatic leverage against Western pressure. The Strategic Partnership Treaty solidifies Russia's place in Iran's Eastern pivot, positioning Moscow as both a key security partner and a major stakeholder in Iran's long-term economic and infrastructure ambitions.

The 2025 Treaty builds upon a foundation of cooperation established over the past many decades. In 2001, Iran and Russia had signed their first major agreement, which laid the groundwork for collaboration in the energy, defence, and military sectors.⁹ This initial agreement has been periodically renewed, reflecting the evolving dynamics of their partnership.¹⁰ Beyond their bilateral

⁸ "10 Questions and Answers about Iran-Russia Strategic Partnership." *Tehran Times*, January 17, 2025. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/508791/10-questions-and-answers-about-iran-russia-strategic-partnership>

⁹ "New Russia-Iran Treaty Reveals the Limits of Their Partnership," *Carnegie*, January 21, 2025. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2025/01/russia-iran-strategic-agreement?lang=en>

¹⁰ "Key Provisions of Russia-Iran Strategic Cooperation Treaty." *Reuters*, January 17, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/key-provisions-russia-iran-strategic-cooperation-treaty-2025-01-17/>

relations, both countries have engaged in strategic partnerships with other countries. Iran, for instance, entered into a 25-year cooperation program with China in 2021, aiming to expand economic and political ties. Similarly, Russia has established comprehensive strategic partnerships with countries like China and North Korea, focusing on defence, economic cooperation, and regional security.

Iran's late President Ebrahim Raisi had met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in 2023, laying the groundwork for the newly-signed strategic partnership treaty. During their discussions, President Raisi emphasized Iran's commitment to expanding economic and defence cooperation with Russia, stating that Tehran viewed Moscow as a reliable partner in countering Western pressures. President Putin, in turn, highlighted Russia's interest in strengthening ties with Iran, particularly in the energy sector and in the development of infrastructure projects, including the North-South Transport Corridor. This meeting served as a precursor to the formal Treaty signed in 2025 and underscored the deepening alignment between the two countries on regional and global matters.

Indeed, the 2025 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty between Russia and Iran signifies a pivotal moment in their bilateral relations, reflecting a shared commitment to deeper cooperation across multiple sectors. While the Treaty stops short of establishing a formal military alliance, it lays a robust foundation for enhanced collaboration, with significant implications for regional dynamics and the global geopolitical landscape. The Russia-Iran Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty holds significant potential for regional stability and economic cooperation. By promoting stronger energy, trade, and infrastructure ties, the Treaty can help enhance connectivity across Eurasia, particularly through the development of transport corridors such as the North-South Transport Corridor. This can benefit regional trade partners, including Pakistan, by improving access to markets in Central Asia and beyond.

Additionally, the Treaty reinforces the drift towards a multipolar world order, reducing unilateral pressures on developing economies, and creating opportunities for regional countries to diversify economic partnerships. The emphasis on independent financial mechanisms and local currencies in trade can mitigate the impact of external sanctions and promote sustainable economic growth. Moreover, enhanced diplomatic coordination between Russia and Iran on security issues may contribute to de-escalation efforts in conflict-prone areas, supporting broader regional stability.