

Appraising the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to critically examine the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement signed between Iran and Russia on December 17, 2024. The research employs a dual-methodological approach, integrating the framework of critical geopolitics with Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA). The CDA methodology is applied in detail at three analytical levels: structures, forces, and context. At the structural level, the agreement's text is dissected to identify Russia as a security-guaranteeing object, with the guarantee of Iran's geopolitical security serving as a floating signifier. This security is positioned in opposition to the counter-securitization discourses advanced by the United States and Israel, which are constructed as threatening geopolitical objects. These actors are shown to employ complex strategies to consolidate pressure on Iran. The analysis of forces focuses on Russia's strategic partnership with Iran, which is pursued through two main actions: first, by placing Iran on a non-securitized agenda, and second, by creating distance and imposing its own geopolitical perspective. At the contextual level, the study examines how the U.S. seeks to minimize Iran's benefits from the agreement by linking it to the nuclear dossier, thereby influencing the broader geopolitical context. The findings reveal that, despite the agreement's intentions, Russia is unable to persuade other geopolitical actors to establish robust, hardware-based relations with Iran. As a result, Russia cannot logically guarantee Iran's geopolitical security, highlighting the limitations of the agreement within the current geopolitical landscape.

Keywords: Critical Geopolitics, Comprehensive Strategic Agreement, Iran and Russia.

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1. Introduction

In today's political world, where a complex array of variables shapes relations between nations, the formulation of geopolitical codes aligned with national interests holds significant importance. In foreign policy, numerous components and indicators come into play, among which security factors, due to their strategic relevance and role in enabling development, play a critical role in shaping foreign policy perspectives (Krickel-Choi,2022:8). With the proliferation of signified meanings and interpretations of concepts in the humanities under critical theories, as well as the increasing complexity of the political arena, security components have also undergone ontological and epistemological shifts (Bastani & Brandimarte,2024:395). For instance, based on critical geopolitical perspectives, the manifestations and dimensions of security have evolved from a purely military focus to multifaceted, interconnected domains such as economic, political, social, environmental, scientific, and cybersecurity (Orosco & Ybarra,2025:11). Consequently, geopolitical coding in foreign policy must simultaneously account for security interdependencies and remain cognizant of the intricate interplay between state and non-state actors (Shah & Khattak,2025:4). The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a political-spatial entity that emerged following the Islamic Revolution's victory over Iran's territory, redefined and reorganized its foreign policy in alignment with the ontological principles of political Islam (Saffari,2024:56). The series of events in the first decade of Iran's Islamic Revolution, along with the nature of relations between various nations and the Islamic Republic, steered Iran's geopolitical codes toward prolonged conflict and tension with geopolitical poles such as the United States. In essence, after the Islamic Revolution's triumph and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a new identity rooted in Islamism was defined based on the tenets of political Islam. This new identity laid the groundwork for safeguarding national interests, thereby generating contradictions and conflicts with the West. The Islamic Republic's promotion of concepts such as "exporting the revolution" and "supporting liberation movements, like those of Palestine and Lebanon," was interpreted in the international system as "revisionist tendencies," "support for terrorism," and "violations of international law" (Mottaghi and Ghareh Beygi,2013:157).

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran was identified as a threat within the international system, necessitating measures to counter it. Addressing or managing this threat, framed through the lens of securitization theory, relies on post-political tools. In other words, the entities involved in the securitization process—including the securitizing actor(s), functional actors, and audience—collaborate to adopt unconventional methods of threat containment, applicable only under specific conditions. However, a critical point regarding the securitized components of Iran's foreign policy is that while this process began during the early years of the Islamic Republic, the perception of Iran as a threat has fluctuated in intensity and scope across different periods. Particularly with the transformation of Iran's nuclear program into a protracted geopolitical conflict between Iran and the United States, a growing inclination toward the East emerged among Iran's ruling elites (Fan,2022:53). The alignment of Europe and the U.S. into a unified front against Iran, coupled with the relative convergence of Russia and China with Iran, amplified the discursive signifier of Eastern orientation, redefining Iran's geopolitical codes through an Eastern-oriented foreign policy (Grajewski,2022:167). This discourse intensified after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 and evolved into a hegemonic signifier in Iranian foreign policy following the Ukraine crisis. Consequently, Iran-Russia military relations advanced, with Russia being recognized as the dominant security hegemon (Saleh & Yazdanshenas, 2023:379).

As this discursive perception solidified, the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia was signed on December 17, 2024, during President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Russia. Given Russia's strategic position in Iran's geopolitical and security frameworks, this study conducts a critical and geopolitical analysis of the Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Agreement.

2. Methodology

This research is applied in terms of its objective and adopts a hermeneutic-critical approach in its methodology. Among the various methods available in the field of critical geopolitics, Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been selected as the analytical framework. The subject of analysis in this study is the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation (CSA), which has been made publicly available through the official website of the Iran's

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (CSA,2025). In this research, the following steps have been taken to analyze the agreement based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis method:

First, the analytical levels of the Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Agreement have been structured around three main axes: structures, forces, and context. Each of these levels includes smaller analytical units. In the first axis, which focuses on identifying structures, smaller units such as objects of security guarantees, geopolitical threatening objects, addressees, functional actors, the position and power relations of actors, and the social identity of actors have been examined.

In the second axis, which deals with forces, smaller analytical units include action-type (as the first unit of analysis), strategic-type (as the second unit of analysis), and the heterogeneous geopolitical network (as the third unit of analysis). Since heterogeneous geopolitical networks are typically designed to pressure non-aligned countries, identifying the channels or pathways through which pressure is exerted is also essential in this section.

In the third axis, which pertains to context, two sub-units of analysis have been identified: first, the impact of threatening objects on the context, and second, the strategies employed by security-guaranteeing actors to maintain and adhere to the context. These steps have been comprehensively applied in the analysis and examination of the aforementioned agreement.

3. Theoretical Framework

3-1. Analytical Units

According to Fairclough's method, the three main levels of analysis and their associated units are distinct and separable, as follows (Berkovich & Benoliel,2018:501).

3-1-1. The Level of Structures

At this level, the focus is on the actors and the relationships between them that play a role in the securitization process of an issue. This level includes four main dimensions:

- a) Entities that directly or indirectly participate in the formation or emergence of security issues or oppose them. These entities include securitizing actors, addressees of security messages, and functional actors.
- b) The position or power relations in which each of these entities is situated.

c) The individual and social identities that constrain or reinforce the behavior of each of these entities.

d) The subject of security (what is being threatened) and the threatening object (what poses the threat).

3-1-2. The Level of Forces

This level encompasses discursive and non-discursive forces that drive geopolitical processes. The categorization of forces into discursive and non-discursive originates from Fairclough's theories (Newman,2020:436). Fairclough argues that discourse is not only constructive but is also constructed by society; thus, discourse maintains a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions (Stutchbury,2021:116). However, this does not mean that all elements of society are purely discursive, as society is a combination of both discursive and non-discursive elements. For example, physical forces such as the construction of roads and bridges fall under non-discursive forces, while forces like journalism are considered discursive (Zhang,2022:17). This level focuses on extra-linguistic variables that occur in real geographical spaces. Extra-linguistic variables are factors that exist outside of language but still influence meaning and emerge during the use of language (Fletcher,2016:185). The level of forces consists of two types:

a) **Action-type**: This type refers to the use of appropriate language to perform a specific action and is related to the grammatical and syntactic rules of language.

b) **Strategic-type**: This type involves the use of expressive tools such as metaphors, analogies, allusions, emotions, or stereotypes by securitizing actors to prepare addressees for mobilization (Hoddy,2018:114).

3-1-3. The Level of Context

This level examines the settings and conditions in which discourse is formed and operates. Context includes historical, cultural, political, and military hardware factors that influence the production and interpretation of discourse. At this level, the interplay between discourse and context is analyzed to provide a better understanding of how meaning and power are constructed within a specific framework. Discourses are formed within a particular context and setting, which is why threatening discourses can only emerge in specific contexts (Price & Martin,2018:92). To understand geopolitical phenomena, comprehending the context and the setting in which discourse is produced is essential.

Critical scholars analyze context within two main frameworks: immediate context and distant context. The immediate context deals with the direct and immediate aspects of geopolitical phenomena and issues, encompassing the immediate conditions and reciprocal relationships. In contrast, the distant context includes broader and external factors such as social, cultural, political, historical elements, and the like.

From a broader perspective, in applied semantics, the distant context is considered equivalent to position. Accordingly, in the immediate context, the focus is on linguistic units, the immediate environment, and the overall linguistic system, while in position, the external world and the environmental conditions governing the speaker and listener are emphasized (Ramazankhani,2018:42). This classification helps researchers provide a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of discourses and geopolitical phenomena by considering the various layers of context.

3-2. Critical Geopolitics

Critical geopolitics in geography and political geography began with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. This school emphasizes Marxist humanism by incorporating socio-psychological factors and views industrial societies as a product of the dominance of instrumental rationality (Klinger, 2020:662). It provides a critical analysis of the Enlightenment movement, evaluates the dominance of thought and action tied to this movement, opposes certain principles of 20th-century positivism, and ultimately critiques instrumental rationality (Oakes,2024:865). Meanwhile, critical geography started its work with feminist analyses and continued with the examination of environmental movements. Geographers of this school abandoned the conventional notion of struggle against nature in the concept of human-nature relationships and instead adopted "harmony with nature," meaning that humans cannot and should not become the masters of nature (Welsh,2023:199). Critical geopolitics, which is a branch of traditional geopolitics, is understood within this framework and is considered one of the important branches of social critique theory in the study of international relations. It is rooted in the post-structuralist movement, which peaked in France during the 1960s (Kluczevska & Silvan,2024:643). In other words, geopolitics, as a part of geographical knowledge that was temporarily excluded from academic circles after the events of World War I and especially World War II, experienced a resurgence in the early 1970s. Modern geopolitics sought to critique its past and dismantle the foundations

of established ideologies. On one hand, it revealed the disparity between the official values and goals of society, and on the other, it exposed the reality of how structures behave in practice (Wegge & Keil,2018:91).

Through this process, new geopolitics diverged from traditional geopolitics and offered entirely different perspectives. Researchers in this field seek to understand how policymakers construct their mental images of the world and how these perceptions influence their interpretations of different places, rather than focusing solely on identifying the impact of geographical factors on foreign policy formation (Sembiring,2025:6). More explicitly, critical geopolitics, in practice, abandons the traditional method of examining the behavior of actors and instead strives to uncover the power interests behind decision-making. By analyzing these structures and the power interests hidden behind geopolitics, it becomes possible to discern a relatively different yet seemingly more accurate picture of what might constitute a country's genuine geopolitical interests (Dini,2025:4). In fact, this fresh approach to geopolitics aims to simplify the complexities of the global political system and reveal the power relations that characterize geopolitical knowledge but were concealed from the perspective of traditional geopolitics. For example, traditional geopolitics, with its realist approach, believes in competition among nations for gaining interests, while critical geopolitics, with its idealist approach, advocates for cooperation and interaction among nations for coexistence on Earth (as a shared biological foundation) (Dalby,2008:419). From the perspective of critical geopolitics, geopolitics has essentially been an imperialist knowledge that, by understanding spaces and places, has shown great powers how to better dominate them and create war and violence (Dittmer & Dodds,2008:439).

Overall, it can be acknowledged that the positivist national-state perspective in traditional geopolitics, framed in terms of competition, led to the emergence of overlapping and intertwined approaches in critical geopolitics. These approaches examine the relationship between security and geopolitics in a continuous, networked, and global manner. Given the interdependence of political-spatial units and societies, the concept of security is no longer individual but has become globalized (Russell & Radil,2023:4). Consequently, the components of threats or security provision have not only taken on a global nature but have also become highly complex, moving beyond purely military-economic dimensions to encompass socio-cultural, political, and environmental aspects (Türkeş-Kılıç,2024:457). The table (1),

outlines the most significant differences between traditional and critical geopolitical perspectives, particularly regarding the concept of security.

Table (1): Differences between Traditional and Critical Geopolitical Perspectives

Traditional Geopolitics	Critical Geopolitics
The primary scale of analysis is the "nation-state." Scales are separate and distinct, with the national or state scale holding particular importance.	Emphasizes the local scale and the Earth at a global scale. Scales are interconnected and networked, meaning changes in one location can have regional or even global consequences.
Nations are considered the key units and influential actors in politics, justifying competition among states to maximize national interests.	The Earth is regarded as the central unit and influential element in various spheres, making cooperation and interaction crucial for protecting shared biological foundations.
Phenomena and events are examined in isolation.	The analysis of phenomena is continuous and interconnected.
Views competition as a natural and logical factor in global politics. This perspective eliminates the possibility of interaction and shared concerns. In traditional geopolitics, military and economic power are strongly recommended to enhance a nation's geopolitical weight in global equations.	In critical geopolitics, emphasizing the "Earth" as humanity's most important geographical phenomenon, strategies to eliminate war, violence, and focus on shared living spaces (Earth) are considered natural and logical.
The concept of security in traditional geopolitics is examined within a national and military framework, with its consequences measured for individual states.	Security is a multifaceted concept, starting at the local scale (e.g., water scarcity in a village), extending to the regional scale (e.g., ineffective government policies in a province), the national scale (e.g., concentration of industry and capital in metropolitan areas), and the planetary scale (e.g., greenhouse gases).

(Source: Agnew,2010; Toal,2003)

4. Findings

4-1. Analytical Levels of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia

Iran's increasing inclination toward the East is a result of the pressures and constraints imposed by geopolitical forces from the Western sphere. These pressures, interpreted in Iranian discourse as a threatening network, have led to the formation of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia. This text can be analyzed at several levels:

4-1-1. Level 1: Structures

At this level, geo-security and geopolitical forces are examined, which transform discursive signifiers into an explicit and incompatible threat. The security actions of states are initiated in response to threats to the object of security. Discourse analysis of the Iran-Russia agreement reveals an

abstract object of security, namely "geo-security stability." Geo-security stability is crucial for Iran because the sanctions imposed on the country have significantly impacted its military hardware. Thus, the threatening object to Iran's security is the lack of modernization in its military hardware and infrastructure, imposed by the Western geopolitical sphere.

As stated in the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia:

"Iran and Russia, considering the vast potential for bilateral cooperation within the framework of this document, will collaborate to achieve the following objectives:

- ✓ Expanding bilateral cooperation in the field of military hardware;
- ✓ Enhancing effectiveness in military, technological, and security hardware;
- ✓ Strategic partnership in various areas of military hardware;
- ✓ Non-disclosure of military and security data and information to countries hostile to Iran and Russia;
- ✓ Strengthening law enforcement and security cooperation in various areas, including counter-terrorism."

As evident, the floating signifier in this agreement is the repeated use of the term "security," reflecting Iran's concerns about the impact of sanctions on the obsolescence of its military hardware. On one hand, maintaining geo-security stability represents Iran's geopolitical value or strategic objective, and on the other hand, actions against this value signify the strategic objectives of countries that have shaped sanctions against Iran. This analysis demonstrates how external pressures and sanctions have shaped Iran's security discourse, steering it toward the East and strategic geo-security cooperation with Russia.

4-1-2. Threatening Object

The first step in identifying an issue as a security threat is undertaken by the threatening object. By examining the text of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia, the subject of the sentences and its position abstractly define the threatening object. In practice, Iran, by equating the poles of threat against itself and Russia, has interpreted the United States, the broader Western geopolitical sphere, and specifically Israel as the primary actors generating threats against itself and Russia.

4-1-3. Addressees

The addressees also emerge as actors involved in the process of maintaining geo-security stability. These actors, by accepting the claims of the threatening object, assist in producing security and preserving geo-security stability. An analysis of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia reveals that third-party countries are mentioned, which could play a role in strengthening the military hardware programs of Iran and Russia. In this text, third-party countries are only referred to as "neighbors," and later, the phrase "neighbors or third-party countries" is used. This indicates that no specific geographical or geopolitical space has been defined for the addressees of this agreement. In other words, there are no specific addressees for the reproduction and stabilization of military hardware security in this agreement.

The absence of specific addressees in this agreement suggests that the text is unable to create a broad geopolitical community. It appears that this agreement cannot evolve from a simple memorandum of understanding into a comprehensive geopolitical construct and attract other countries as supporters of geo-security within this framework. In reality, for Iran to establish a geopolitical community centered around the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement, it needs to attract countries that share a common threatening object with Iran—that is, countries that are in opposition to the broader Western geopolitical sphere, particularly Israel, and whose geo-security stability is at risk.

However, even if such countries are attracted, there is no guarantee that Russia will cooperate within this shared framework. This highlights the challenges Iran faces in transforming this agreement into a broad and sustainable geopolitical pact. Consequently, while the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia represents a significant step toward strengthening bilateral cooperation, it requires the inclusion of more countries with shared interests and threats to establish a broader geopolitical alliance.

4-1-4. Functional Actors

Functional actors are defined as agents and structures that significantly influence decision-making in the security domain. Within the framework of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia, the most important actors that could play an effective role are the BRICS alliance and the Eurasian Customs Union. These two regional coalitions share significant

commonalities with Iran's Eastern-oriented policy and can act as supportive mechanisms for achieving the objectives of this agreement.

However, from the perspective of the text and its context, the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia is unable to attract a broad geopolitical community. Therefore, turning to regional organizations and coalitions such as BRICS and the Eurasian Customs Union can serve as an effective compensatory strategy. These coalitions, by strengthening regional cooperation, can act as alternatives to the limitations of the bilateral agreement between Iran and Russia.

4-1-5. The Impact of Functional Actors on Iran's Geo-Security Stability

The impact of these two functional actors (BRICS and the Eurasian Customs Union) on Iran's geo-security stability depends on the extent to which they enhance Iran's geopolitical weight. However, there are challenges in this regard:

a) **Confrontation with the Western Geopolitical Sphere:** Since the primary function of BRICS and the Eurasian Customs Union is to promote free markets and facilitate trade, Iran's confrontation with the Western geopolitical sphere could disrupt the functioning of these coalitions. This confrontation may also affect Iran's military cooperation with member countries of these coalitions.

b) **Iran's Lack of Competitive Advantage:** Compared to powerful geopolitical forces such as China, Russia, and Southeast Asian countries, Iran does not possess a significant competitive advantage. This limits Iran's ability to create substantial added value for member countries of these coalitions through the export of military and industrial hardware. As a result, Iran's role in these coalitions may be reduced to a secondary participant rather than a primary actor.

In reality, while the BRICS alliance and the Eurasian Customs Union can act as effective functional actors in supporting the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia, the challenges Iran faces in strengthening its geopolitical weight and creating added value within these coalitions pose significant limitations. To overcome these challenges, Iran needs to develop long-term strategies to enhance its competitiveness in economic, industrial, and technological domains. Only then can it effectively play a role in these regional coalitions and strengthen its geo-security stability.

4-1-6. Position and Power Relations of Actors

In the critical analysis of Iran-Russia relations, in addition to the nature of the actors involved in Iran's geo-security process, special attention must be paid to the position and power relations of these actors. Examining the position and power relations of the actors involved in this process clarifies the role and level of influence each has in shaping Iran's geopolitical security.

4-1-7. Russia's Role as a Security-Producing Actor

The Russian Federation, as one of the key actors in producing security for Iran, is significant in two aspects:

1. **Object of Geo-Security Stability:** Russia plays a role in establishing Iran's geo-security stability, particularly through programs aimed at strengthening Iran's military hardware.
2. **Military and Geopolitical Power:** With its advanced military capabilities and hardware, as well as its significant geopolitical weight in the United Nations Security Council, Russia has the ability to distance itself from anti-Iranian geopolitical forces and impose its ideology on them.

4-1-8. The Position of Russia, China, and Regional Alliances

In addition to Russia, China as a key structural actor and regional alliances such as the Eurasian Customs Union and the BRICS pact, as functional actors, hold significant positions in this process due to their military power and advanced hardware. However, several key points must be noted:

1. **Inequality in the Power Hierarchy:** The agreements between Iran and Russia, as well as Iran's participation in organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, are not binding for member countries. This indicates that Iran occupies an unequal position in the power hierarchy compared to these actors.
2. **Iran's Limitations in Influence:** Despite strategic cooperation, Iran's economic, technological, and military limitations prevent it from being as influential as countries like China and Russia within these alliances. This power inequality restricts Iran's ability to shape key decision-making processes in these organizations.

In the critical analysis of Iran's relations with Russia and other regional and global actors, the position and power relations play a decisive role. Although China and Russia, as primary actors, can contribute to strengthening Iran's geopolitical security, the inequality in the power

hierarchy and the non-binding nature of agreements for member countries pose significant challenges for Iran. To overcome these challenges, Iran needs to enhance its domestic capabilities in economic, technological, and military domains to elevate its position within these alliances and play a more effective role in shaping geopolitical security processes.

4-1-9. Social Identity of Actors

The final unit of analysis at the level of actors involved in the geo-security process is their social identity, which can either constrain or enhance their agency. However, since the actors involved in Iran's geopolitical security typically operate within the framework of structures and organizations, organizational identity holds greater explanatory power compared to social identity. Organizational identity refers to the collective understanding of an organization's members about its core and enduring characteristics, which distinguish it from other organizations. Accordingly, the "strategy" of an organization is the key element in maintaining its identity, and based on this strategy, the organization is able to sustain its activities.

With this definition of organizational identity in the analysis of the Iran-Russia Strategic Cooperation Agreement, the strategy of "geo-security stability" is emphasized as the central axis of the agreement. Textually, this strategy strengthens Iran's organizational identity and enables it to sustain its existence over time. Since the sanctions imposed on Iran are directly linked to its geo-security stability, Iran's organizational identity is reinforced to manage these challenges. This, in turn, enhances Iran's agency in the geopolitical arena. However, in practice, it seems unlikely that the Russian Federation would want or be able to define itself as a permanent threatening object against the United States. In other words, the realization of the provisions of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia requires the definition of a shared Iranian-Russian identity and the identification of common threats. Yet, the realities in the field of military hardware and on-the-ground conditions weaken the possibility of forming a shared Iranian-Russian signifier against the United States.

4-1-10. The Role of Functional Actors in Threat Management

In addition to the United States as the threatening object, the influence of functional actors in mitigating and managing these threats is also significant. The core value of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement

between Iran and Russia is the "non-disclosure of military and security information to hostile parties." This strategy is directly linked to the United States and Israel, enabling Iran to play an appropriate role in managing its security environment.

4-1-11. BRICS and the Eurasian Customs Union

The BRICS pact and the Eurasian Customs Union, relying on the pillar of "foreign trade and joint commerce," pursue the strategy of "strengthening military hardware indicators and facilitating trade and crisis management among member countries." This strategy partially aligns with Iran's geo-security stability. However, in terms of positioning, these coalitions are unable to play an effective role in enhancing the stability of Iran's military hardware. Organizational identity and its associated strategies play a key role in shaping Iran's agency in the geopolitical security process. Nevertheless, the challenges in defining a shared identity with Russia and the limitations of functional actors such as the BRICS pact and the Eurasian Customs Union highlight the obstacles Iran faces in fully achieving the objectives of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement. To overcome these challenges, Iran needs to strengthen regional and international cooperation, as well as enhance its capabilities in economic, technological, and military domains.

4-2. Level 2: Forces

At this level, the focus is on discursive and non-discursive practices, as well as extra-linguistic variables. The level of forces encompasses the following dimensions:

4-2-1. First Unit of Analysis: Type of Forces

The type of forces refers to the adherence of security-guaranteeing actors to grammatical and syntactic rules of language. These actors use this capability to guide the audience toward specific actions. In this context, the foreign policies of Iran and Russia can be analyzed within the following frameworks:

a) Framing Iran's Issues in a Non-Security Agenda: Russia defines the starting point of Iran's geo-security based on "U.S. sanctions." By employing negative verbs such as "non-compliance of sanctions with humanitarian principles," "U.S. failure to adhere to IAEA Board of Governors agreements," and "disregard for international norms," Russia rejects the geopolitical narratives produced against Iran by the United

States. This grammatical negation places Iran on a non-security agenda, opposes sanctions against Iran, and encourages the audience to challenge the claims of the threatening object (the United States).

b) Distancing and Imposing Perspectives: While the text of the Iran-Russia Strategic Agreement does not explicitly show coercive or imperative approaches, Russia's behavioral analysis reveals its use of imperative and directive verbs to distance itself from the Western geopolitical sphere and impose its perspective. To identify such distancing in critical geopolitical discourse, one must look for subjunctive verbs like "must" in the text. This verb, due to its legal and formal nature, establishes a position of authority for the text's producer and projects a sense of hegemony and power. Conversely, the imposition of Russia's anti-sanctions perspective aims to influence the audience to ultimately achieve the agreement's objective: geo-security stability.

4-2-2. Strategic Partnership

According to the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement, "Iran and Russia are close partners in commercial, military, political, and security spheres, with extensive shared views and interests in bilateral and multilateral arenas, and regard each other as key strategic partners." This statement indicates that Iran views Russia as an object guaranteeing security, justifying the strategic partnership to manage risks posed by the threatening object (the United States and Israel).

In the analysis of the forces level, the type of force, as the first unit of analysis, plays a key role in guiding actors and audiences. Through grammatical and syntactic verbs, security-guaranteeing actors like China and Russia seek to negate geopolitical narratives against Iran, reinforce distancing from the Western geopolitical sphere, and impose their perspectives on the audience. The Iran-Russia strategic partnership emerges as a strategy to counter threats from the threatening object. This analysis demonstrates how language and discourse shape geopolitical and security relations.

4-2-3. Second Unit of Analysis: Strategic Type

The strategic type, as the second unit of analysis at the level of action, is a tool used by security-guaranteeing actors to consolidate addressees and guide them toward specific objectives. In the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia, formal lexical and grammatical structures are employed, with no use of literary devices such as irony,

metaphor, or analogy. However, the text contains traces of stereotypes, which play a significant role in critical geopolitical analysis.

In this study, a stereotype is defined as "a conventional notion of how a geopolitical event is perceived." Accordingly, stereotypes link concepts to their intended meanings and provide implicit, non-explicit interpretations of geopolitical realities. These stereotypes allow actors to imagine their goals and missions as achievable by accessing shared concepts.

4-2-4. Stereotypes in the Text of the Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Agreement

The text of the Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Agreement contains stereotypes that are highly effective in identifying geopolitical trends. These stereotypes enable Iran and Russia to imagine the agreement's mission as achievable by accessing shared implicit concepts.

4-2-5. Rejection of External Pressures

One of the key stereotypes in the text is the "rejection of external pressures." This stereotype, by referencing conventional traits and notions related to neutralizing the effects of sanctions, evokes the image of geo-security. This image makes it necessary to take appropriate measures to manage threats arising from external pressures. The strategic type in the text of the Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Agreement, through the use of stereotypes, helps consolidate addressees and guide them toward shared objectives. Stereotypes such as "rejection of external pressures" not only reinforce the image of geo-security but also justify the necessary actions to manage threats arising from sanctions and external pressures. This analysis demonstrates how stereotypes play a role in shaping geopolitical discourses and guiding actors.

4-2-6. Third Unit of Analysis: Heterogeneous Geopolitical Network

The third unit of analysis at the level of geo-security action is the heterogeneous geopolitical network. Considering the threatening object in both regulatory and capacity domains for effectively applying and managing threats, as well as examining China's agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran, it can be argued that the threatening object in the context of Iran's nuclear dossier has primarily relied on regulatory tools. These regulatory tools, related to the legislative domain, refer to two documents: the Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol. The final versions of these documents were made available to countries in September 1997 (INFCIRC/540). In practice, the United States ensures the effectiveness of

sanctions against Iran by leveraging a vast and diverse network of treaties, organizations, structures, and actors. To manage this heterogeneous geopolitical network, Iran must, in turn, produce its own heterogeneous geopolitical network. Thus, the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia, which aims at fostering bilateral cooperation, appears to be a compensatory and counteractive measure by Iran. However, in the geopolitical arena, it seems that the heterogeneous geopolitical networks Iran has designed to manage U.S. sanction pressures are not proving effective.

4-2-7. Channels for Solidifying Pressure

The United States also employs other tools to solidify pressure and ensure the effectiveness of sanctions against Iran. These pressure channels, which are part of the U.S. heterogeneous geopolitical network against Iran, restrict Iran's agency and capacity for effective action. One such pressure channel is the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). This intergovernmental entity, primarily active in the fields of money laundering, terrorist financing, and other threats to the integrity of the geopolitical financial system, plays a crucial role in monitoring financial exchanges between countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this regard, the FATF implements measures under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council to oversee transactions involving Iranian banks, including the Central Bank, which are involved in sensitive nuclear activities or the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems. Iran has been unable to develop an effective counter-strategy against these pressure channels. Even in the text of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement, there are no channels to mitigate the pressures arising from financial disruptions imposed by the FATF.

4-3. Level 3: Context

At the third level of analyzing Iran-Russia relations within the framework of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement, the interdependence between the agent and the context is evaluated. This interdependence is examined through the following two propositions:

4-3-1. The Impact of the Threatening object on Context

The extent to which the threatening object influences the context (the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia) depends on factors such as power position, linguistic capacity, and the ability to implement and operationalize threats. In the context of the Comprehensive

Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia, the threatening object holds a high-power position. The alignment of major military and geopolitical powers, as well as its global objectivity within the United Nations and the Security Council, has established this position for the United States.

Linking the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia to Iran's nuclear dossier represents a form of geopolitical networking. Through this, the United States attempts to define China as an actor opposing the global order and to delegitimize military hardware relations with Iran. This process activates anti-Chinese geopolitical propaganda and image-building, intensifying it and thereby complicating effective cooperation between China and Iran in the field of military hardware.

4-3-2. Approaches of the Security-Guaranteeing Actor (Russia) to Adhere to Context

To neutralize the geopolitical imaginaries of the United States (as a threatening object against Iran), Russia (as the security-guaranteeing actor in favor of Iran) must engage in behavioral and linguistic justifications to legitimize its agreement with Iran. Russian invasion of Ukraine (on February 24, 2022) led to an increase in pressures and tensions between the United States and the European Union against Russia. In response, Russia engaged in a discursive contrast with the geopolitical imaginaries of the United States and the European Union. From a critical geopolitical perspective, Russia sought to halt the securitizing labels attached to itself and, instead, maintain its hardware and military relations with Iran. However, the limited influence of Russia's geopolitical network has resulted in insufficient support from other geopolitical actors, including China, for Iran. Consequently, Iran's military technologies and geostrategic frameworks have encountered significant vulnerabilities. In essence, the structural, functional, and operational disparities between Russia's geopolitical network and that of the United States have diminished the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia.

5. Discussion

The Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia reflects a calculated response to systemic pressures within the global geopolitical order, particularly the asymmetrical power dynamics shaping Iran's security and economic trajectories. By pivoting toward Russia, Iran seeks to mitigate vulnerabilities exacerbated by Western sanctions, which have directly

targeted its military and technological infrastructure. This strategic alignment, however, is not merely transactional; it is embedded in a broader discursive framework where “geo-security stability” emerges as a central organizing principle. This concept, while abstract, operationalizes Iran’s perceived need to counterbalance external threats through military modernization and alliance-building. Yet, the agreement’s emphasis on bilateral cooperation—centered on military hardware, technological collaboration, and non-disclosure of sensitive information—reveals inherent contradictions. While it addresses immediate security concerns, it simultaneously exposes Iran’s reliance on external actors to sustain its defensive capabilities, raising questions about long-term autonomy and strategic parity.

A critical tension lies in the agreement’s inability to transcend bilateralism and foster a cohesive geopolitical community. The absence of clearly defined addressees beyond vague references to “neighbors or third-party countries” underscores a fundamental limitation: the text lacks the discursive and structural mechanisms to attract broader regional or global support. For Iran to transform this agreement into a multilateral framework, it must reconcile its security imperatives with the divergent interests of potential partners. Countries opposing the Western geopolitical sphere, particularly those sharing Iran’s perception of the United States and Israel as primary threats, are logical candidates. However, the agreement’s failure to articulate a shared identity or unified geopolitical vision with Russia complicates this prospect. Russia’s ambivalence toward permanently positioning itself as a “threatening object” against the West highlights the fragility of Iran’s strategy. Without mutual commitment to a cohesive adversarial identity, the partnership risks remaining a tactical arrangement rather than evolving into a durable alliance.

The role of functional actors such as BRICS and the Eurasian Customs Union further illustrates the complexities of Iran’s geopolitical calculus. While these coalitions align superficially with Iran’s Eastern orientation, their primary focus on economic integration and trade liberalization clashes with Iran’s securitized agenda. BRICS, for instance, prioritizes market expansion and multilateral governance, objectives that are incongruent with Iran’s confrontational stance toward Western financial and regulatory regimes. Moreover, Iran’s limited competitive advantage in industrial and technological sectors undermines its capacity to contribute meaningfully to

these alliances, relegating it to a peripheral role. This dynamic reinforces existing power asymmetries, as dominant actors like China and Russia retain disproportionate influence over coalition agendas. Iran's participation in such frameworks thus becomes symbolic rather than substantive, highlighting the challenges of leveraging multilateralism to offset unilateral sanctions.

Power hierarchies further constrain Iran's agency within these partnerships. The non-binding nature of agreements with Russia and regional blocs like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization entrenches Iran's subordinate position. Unlike Russia or China, Iran lacks the economic heft, technological sophistication, or military reach to shape decision-making processes within these forums. This inequality is compounded by structural barriers: Western sanctions limit Iran's access to global financial systems, while institutions like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) amplify regulatory pressures. The FATF's oversight of Iranian financial transactions, framed as countering money laundering and terrorist financing, exemplifies how regulatory tools are weaponized to isolate Iran economically. The absence of counterstrategies in the Iran-Russia agreement to address such pressures underscores a critical gap in Iran's geopolitical playbook. Without mechanisms to neutralize financial isolation, even robust military partnerships will struggle to ensure comprehensive security.

At the discursive level, the agreement employs linguistic strategies to delegitimize Western narratives and reinforce Iran's security discourse. Russia's framing of U.S. sanctions as violations of "humanitarian principles" and "international norms" serves to position Iran as a victim of coercive geopolitics, thereby justifying the partnership as a defensive measure. This narrative, however, clashes with the material realities of Iran's geopolitical isolation. Stereotypes such as the "rejection of external pressures" function discursively to unify domestic and bilateral audiences around a shared resistance ethos, yet they lack the operational specificity to translate rhetorical solidarity into actionable policies. The agreement's reliance on formal, legalistic language—devoid of metaphorical or analogical devices—further limits its capacity to inspire broader ideological mobilization beyond state-centric actors.

Ultimately, the agreement's efficacy hinges on Iran's ability to reconcile its securitized priorities with the pragmatic demands of multilateral engagement. While the partnership with Russia provides short-term tactical

benefits, its sustainability depends on Iran's capacity to enhance its domestic industrial and technological base, thereby reducing dependency on external actors. Simultaneously, Iran must navigate the paradox of seeking integration into economic coalitions like BRICS while resisting the liberal norms underpinning these frameworks. The path forward necessitates a dual strategy: fortifying bilateral ties with Russia as a counterweight to Western pressure, while pursuing incremental reforms to improve competitiveness and diplomatic flexibility. Without such measures, the agreement risks remaining a reactive maneuver rather than a transformative geopolitical strategy.

Moreover, there is abundant complementary empirical evidence indicating that Russia cannot guarantee Iran's geopolitical security. Among these, two primary empirical cases are highlighted below.

1) The Collapse of the Bashar al-Assad Regime and Russia's Limited Support

The collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria and its replacement by the Sudanese government in 2024-2025 underscores the divergent strategic priorities between Russia and Iran. Iran invested heavily in preserving Assad's rule, viewing Syria as a crucial geopolitical ally and a conduit for influence in the Levant. Iranian support included military advisors, proxy militias, and financial aid aimed at regime survival. However, Russia's support during critical internal upheavals was notably restrained. According to recent analyses, Russia prioritized maintaining a flexible regional posture, avoiding overcommitment to Assad's regime amid shifting alliances and emerging regional actors (International Crisis Group, 2025). Moscow's reluctance to fully back Assad during the regime's final crisis phase reveals a strategic calculus that diverges from Tehran's. This divergence highlights that Russia's geopolitical interests do not always align with Iran's, weakening the assumption that Russia can be a steadfast security guarantor for Iran. The Syrian case exemplifies Russia's pragmatic approach, which balances influence with caution, often at odds with Iran's ideological and strategic investments (Lynch, 2025).

2) The 12-Day Iran-Israel Conflict and Russia's Defensive Limitations

The June 13–24, 2025 conflict between Iran and Israel, exposed Russia's inability to provide Iran with effective geopolitical security guarantees, particularly through military support. During the conflict, Israel launched extensive airstrikes against Iranian nuclear and military infrastructure, while

Iran retaliated with ballistic missiles and UAV attacks (Alma,2025). Critically, Iran faced significant vulnerabilities as Russia refused to supply advanced air defense systems such as the S-400 missile batteries and Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets, which could have enhanced Iran's defensive capabilities against Israeli F-35 strikes (Times of London,2025). The absence of these systems left Iranian airspace exposed, undermining Iran's ability to deter or effectively counter Israeli technological superiority. Analysts argue that Russia's reluctance reflects its cautious geopolitical stance, balancing relations with Israel and the West while avoiding direct confrontation (CNN,2025; Understanding War,2025). This selective engagement demonstrates that Russia prioritizes its broader strategic interests over Iran's security needs, limiting its capacity to serve as a reliable security guarantor. The conflict thus reveals the practical limitations of the Russia-Iran partnership in the face of regional military challenges.

6. Conclusion

The Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia underscores a pivotal shift in Iran's geopolitical strategy, driven by the imperative to counteract Western sanctions and secure military modernization through bilateral cooperation. This analysis reveals that while the agreement frames "geo-security stability" as its cornerstone, its efficacy is constrained by structural limitations, including vague addressees, power asymmetries, and the absence of a cohesive multilateral framework. Iran's reliance on Russia as a security guarantor highlights tactical adaptation to external pressures but also exposes vulnerabilities: dependence on external actors, limited influence within regional coalitions like BRICS, and an inability to neutralize regulatory tools such as FATF oversight. The stakes of this strategic alignment extend beyond bilateral relations, reflecting broader tensions in the global order. By positioning itself against the Western geopolitical sphere, Iran risks deepening its isolation from liberal economic networks, even as it seeks integration into alternative alliances. The agreement's emphasis on military collaboration and non-disclosure protocols, while addressing immediate security needs, fails to resolve systemic challenges such as financial isolation or technological underdevelopment. This underscores the paradox of Iran's strategy: it seeks autonomy through partnerships that inherently compromise its agency. Moving forward, this analysis invites critical reflection on the sustainability of Iran's Eastern pivot. Can Iran leverage regional coalitions to offset

unilateral sanctions without reconciling its confrontational posture with the economic priorities of partners like China or Russia? How might evolving power dynamics within BRICS or the Eurasian Customs Union reshape Iran's geopolitical calculus? Future research could explore the role of non-state actors in shaping Iran's security discourse or assess the long-term viability of its compensatory alliances in an increasingly multipolar world. For policymakers, the findings suggest that Iran's geo-security stability hinges not only on external partnerships but on internal reforms to enhance technological competitiveness and diplomatic flexibility. Ultimately, the agreement serves as a microcosm of a larger phenomenon: the struggle of sanctioned states to navigate a global order where security is increasingly contingent on economic resilience and multilateral legitimacy.

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8. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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