

## The impact of the 2022 Ukraine war on Iran–Russia relations: Iranian elites’ perspective

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Original Article                      Main Object: International Relations                      Scope: Russia, Iran</p> <p>Received: 03 October 2023                      Revised: 29 October 2023                      Accepted: 08 November 2023                      Published online: 19 November 2023</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>                      Iranian elites,                      Islamic Republic of Iran,                      Russia,                      Ukraine crisis.</p>	<p>Russia's military attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, affected, dramatically, the international system. The following change in the balance of power between the great powers, opportunities and threats has emerged for the Islamic Republic of Iran and has affected the country's relations with Russia. It seems that Iranian instrumental and academic elites have different viewpoints regarding the nature of these opportunities and threats and their effects on Tehran-Moscow relations. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the approach of Iran's (scientific and instrumental) elites towards the war between Russia and Ukraine and its effects on Tehran-Moscow relations. The current paper seeks to answer the question that from the viewpoint of Iranian elites, how the 2022 war in Ukraine has affected the relations between Iran and Russia? In order to investigate the perceptual process of Iranian elites regarding the developments in Ukraine and its impact on Iran's relations with Russia, a questionnaire has been adopted. The data collection method of this research is based on a field study and the data analysis method is "mixed method". The sample of this research consists of 24 instrumental and academic elites with qualifications in this field. The findings of the research indicate that from the point of view of the majority of Iranian elites, geopolitical requirements, common threats and sanctions have been an effective factor in bringing the positions of Iran and Russia closer to the developments in Ukraine. From the point of view of these elites, the relative improvement of relations between Iran and Russia was merely a reaction to international conditions.</p>

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**Extended Abstract****Introduction**

International events at different times create new patterns of cooperation and conflict among international actors. In fact, developments and incidents that happen in the international system, not only affect the relations between countries at international level, but also provide the basis for political, economic and military cooperation and conflict at the regional level. The emergence of the Ukraine crisis in the 21st century, as one of the most controversial issues in the international system, has affected the foreign policy of regional and transregional actors. In addition to widespread effects on the level of the international system, this crisis has also had profound consequences on the relations between Iran and Russia. This article examines the views of Iranian elites on the impact of the 2022 Ukraine war on Iran– Russia relations.

**Aims**

Answering to this question: How the 2022 war in Ukraine has affected the relations between Iran and Russia from the viewpoint of the Iranian elites?

**Research Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of the article states that due to the 2022 Ukraine War, the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation have boosted tremendously, but there is a long way to become close in strategic cooperation.

**Methodology**

The conceptual framework if there are: In this research, the effects of the 2022 Ukraine war on Iran-Russian relations has been examined by designing a questionnaire and based on interviews with specialists and officials, managers and experts of the Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (instrumental elites), and university professors, researchers and thinkers (scientific elites). This research is especially noteworthy in the field of policy recommendations. The research method will be a combination of field study and explanatory methods through questionnaires and interviews, and the analysis of their results will be done in a mixed method. In order to determine the sample size and determine the number of people who have been interviewed, a selective and targeted sampling method has been used. The statistical sample in the field study stage includes 12 officials, ambassadors, managers, and senior experts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (instrumental elites) and 12 university professors, researchers, and thinkers (scientific elites). In order to achieve the main goal of the research and collect data, a semi-structured questionnaire in the Likert scale was used. In this questionnaire, 20 questions were designed to

examine the opinion of Iranian elites. All the questions have been measured in the five-choice Likert scale (1-very little, to 5-very much).

### **Results and Discussion**

24 Iranian elites (12 instrumental elites and 12 scientific elites) were asked 20 questions through a questionnaire, 19 multiple-choice questions based on the Likert scale and 1 descriptive and open question. From the viewpoint of the instrumental elites, the Ukraine crisis has strengthened military and security cooperation, increased the transit of Russian products from Iran, boosted cooperation in international forums, especially the United Nations, and increased the scope of exchanges of Russian delegations to Iran, which not only provides a platform for bilateral and multilateral cooperation of these actors in order to deal with sanctions, but also expands the development of economic cooperation. From the viewpoint of the instrumental elites, Iran is satisfied with the war in Ukraine and has evaluated it in the line with its national interests in the international arena, to the extent that it has provided political or military support to Russia's actions in Ukraine. According to this group, due to Iran's unwanted involvement into the Ukraine crisis (the issue of drones), the cooperation of these two countries will increase in the international scene, and Russia will oblige itself to support Iran against the political threats of the West. From the point of view of the scientific elites, the crisis in Ukraine will increase the motivation of both sides to expand relations in the near future, but one factor will never create a strategic relationship. Attention should be paid to the set of effective factors in the relations between Iran and Russia. This group believes that the war in Ukraine can have both positive and negative impacts on the relations between the two countries. Although, in general, its positive load (in the direction of developing relationships) can outweigh the negative one; But, it should be noted that this depends on the will and proactiveness of the Iranian government to take advantage of the resulting opportunities. In addition, it should be noted that if Iran does not benefit from these relations, there are other actors that Russia can rely, as it has done so far.

### **Conclusion**

The 2022 Ukraine crisis and the policy orientation of international actors in this crisis caused a change in the international interactions. From the point of view of Iranian elites, relations between Iran and Russia have been merely a reaction to international conditions. Regarding Iran's close relations with Russia, it is important to mention that Iran and Russia are not allies or even strategic partners of each other, but Iran is only a tactical partner of Russia. Finally, it should be

noted that the developments in Ukraine are always ongoing and the course of future developments and the end of the war in Ukraine will determine whether power relations and its balance have changed at the world level or not. From the point of view of the Iranian elites, the war is still going on, so the effects of the Ukraine war on the relations between Iran and Russia depend on how this war ends.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

### Authors' contributions

All authors contributed to the original idea, study design.

### Ethical considerations

The authors have completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

### Data availability

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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