

Limits of Defiance?
The Role of Post-Soviet Nations in
Modernisation of the Iranian Armed Forces and
Defence Industries

A Dissertation

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Contents

Tables	7
Figures	8
Maps	9
Appendices	10
Acknowledgements	11
List of Acronyms	12
1. Introduction	14
1.1. Description of the Issue.....	14
1.2. Rationale for the Dissertation Topic.....	15
1.3. Objective of the Dissertation.....	16
1.4. State of Research.....	16
1.4.1. <i>Development and Modernisation of Iranian Defence Capacities</i>	16
1.4.2. <i>Modernisation of Iranian Defence Capacities and Iran's Relations with the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Nations</i>	22
1.5. Research Design and Scope.....	30
1.6. Definitions.....	32
1.7. Methodology.....	33
1.8. Dissertation Structure.....	35
1.9. Sources.....	36
2. Thinking about International Cooperation: Theoretical Framework	38
2.1. The Neorealist View of International Relations.....	39
2.2. International Cooperation.....	44
2.3. The Problem of Relative Gains and Positionality.....	45
2.4. Geopolitical factors.....	49
2.5. Regional Hegemony and Balancing Alliances.....	52
2.6. Conclusions.....	55
3. Overview of Defence Cooperation between (F)SU Nations and Iran	56
3.1. Relations between Iran and the Soviet Union in the Defence Sphere before 1989.....	58
3.2. Relations between Iran and the Soviet Union in the Defence Sphere in 1989-1991.....	63
3.2.1. <i>Transfer of Hardware and Materials</i>	63
3.2.2. <i>Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge</i>	64
3.2.3. <i>Results</i>	65
3.3. Relations between Iran and the Russian Federation in the Defence Sphere between 1992-2000.....	66
3.3.1. <i>Hardware and Materials</i>	66

3.3.2. <i>Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge</i>	71
3.3.3. <i>Results</i>	75
3.4. Relations between Iran and the Russian Federation in the Defence Sphere in the 2000s	77
3.4.1. <i>Hardware and Materials</i>	77
3.4.2. <i>Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge</i>	84
3.4.3. <i>Results</i>	89
3.5. Relation between Iran and the Russian Federation in the Defence Sphere in 2010-2015	90
3.5.1. <i>Hardware and Materials</i>	90
3.5.2. <i>Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge</i>	93
3.5.3. <i>Results</i>	94
3.6. Relation between Iran and Ukraine in the Defence Sphere in the 1990s	95
3.6.1. <i>Hardware</i>	95
3.6.2. <i>Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge</i>	97
3.6.3. <i>Results</i>	101
3.7. Relation between Iran and Ukraine in the Defence Sphere in the 2000s	101
3.7.1. <i>Transfer of Hardware and Materials</i>	101
3.7.2. <i>Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge</i>	102
3.7.3. <i>Results</i>	104
3.8. Relations between Iran and Ukraine in the Defence Sphere in the 2010s	104
3.8.1. <i>Hardware and Materials</i>	104
3.8.2. <i>Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge</i>	105
3.8.3. <i>Results</i>	105
3.9. Relation between Iran and Belarus in the Defence Sphere in the 1990s-2010s	106
3.9.1. <i>Hardware and Materials</i>	106
3.9.2. <i>Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge</i>	107
3.9.3. <i>Results</i>	109
3.10. Conclusions	109

4. Domestic Structural Factors in Defence-Related Cooperation

between Iran and (F)SU Nations	115
4.1. Economic Incentives for (F)SU Nations to Cooperate with Iran	116
4.2. The Leverage of Defence Industries in Cooperation with Iran	121
4.2.1. <i>The 1995 Gore-Chernomyrdin Agreement</i>	123
4.2.2. <i>Implementation of UN Sanctions against Iran in 2010</i>	123
4.2.3. <i>The Ukrainian Government's Policy of Reducing Cooperation with Iran</i>	125
4.3. Legal Uncertainty and Defence Export Systems in Post-Soviet Countries	127
4.4. Non-Authorised Transfers of Equipment, Services and Expertise	132
4.5. Iran's Financial Constraints	140
4.6. Iran's Defence Industries and Their Development	145
4.6.1. <i>Overhaul of Soviet- and Russian-Made Equipment</i>	148
4.6.2. <i>Establishment of Aircraft Production</i>	152
4.7. Conclusions	157

5. The Foreign Policies of (F)SU Nations and Iran and Their Defence-Related Cooperation

5.1. The International Context of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Nations	160
5.1.1. <i>Soviet-Iranian Relations in the 1980s-1991</i>	162
5.1.2. <i>Russian-Iranian Relations in the 1990s</i>	167
5.1.3. <i>Russian-Iranian Relations in the 2000s</i>	174

5.1.4. <i>Russian-Iranian Relations in the 2010s</i>	179
5.1.5. <i>Ukraine-Iranian Relations and Their International Context</i>	182
5.1.6. <i>Belarusian-Iranian Relations and Their International Context</i>	193
5.2. Broader International Context of Cooperation between the (F)SU Nations and Iran.....	199
5.2.1. <i>Vulnerability of (F)SU Nations' Cooperation with Iran in the Context of their Engagement with the West</i>	199
5.2.2. <i>Engagement Index</i>	202
5.2.3. <i>Broader International Context and Soviet-Iranian relations in 1989-1991</i>	203
5.2.4. <i>Broader International Context and Russian-Iranian relations</i>	205
5.2.5. <i>Broader International Context and Ukrainian-Iranian relations</i>	208
5.2.6. <i>Broader International Context and Belarusian-Iranian relations</i>	211
5.3. Possible Correlations between the (F)SU Countries' Cooperation with Iran and Their Engagement with the West.....	215
5.4. Conclusions.....	218

6. Allies or Competitors? Strategic Cooperation and Competition

between Iran and (F)SU Nations	221
6.1. Iran's Strategic Concerns and Cooperation with the (F)SU Nations.....	222
6.2. Soviet Strategic Concerns and Cooperation with Iran.....	224
6.3. Russian Strategic Concerns and Cooperation with Iran.....	228
6.4. Ukrainian and Belarusian Strategic Concerns and Cooperation with Iran.....	235
6.5. Influence of Geopolitical Factors on the Quality of Defence-Related Cooperation.....	237
6.6. Major Issues of Strategic Cooperation and Competition between the Soviet Union and Iran at Regional and International Levels.....	239
6.6.1. <i>Iran's Export of the Islamic Revolution</i>	239
6.6.2. <i>Caspian Sea</i>	241
6.7. Major Issues of Strategic Cooperation and Competition between Russia and Iran at Regional and International Levels.....	242
6.7.1. <i>Civil War in Tajikistan</i>	242
6.7.2. <i>Cooperation in Central Asia</i>	244
6.7.3. <i>Iran as a Transit Route or Regional Leader for post-Soviet Nations</i>	244
6.7.4. <i>Iran's Export of the Islamic Revolution</i>	247
6.7.5. <i>The Caspian Sea</i>	248
6.7.6. <i>The North-South International Transport Corridor</i>	249
6.7.7. <i>The Gas Exporting Countries Forum</i>	249
6.7.8. <i>Interaction in the Middle East</i>	250
6.7.9. <i>Interaction between the Armed Forces of Iran and Russia</i>	252
6.8. Major Issues of Strategic Cooperation and Competition between Ukraine, Belarus and Iran at Regional and International Levels.....	254
6.8.1. <i>Iran as an Alternative to Russian Energy Sources</i>	254
6.8.2. <i>Trilateral cooperation of Ukraine, Iran and Turkmenistan</i>	258
6.9. Conclusions.....	259
7. Iran-(F)SU Defence-Related Cooperation and Third Parties	262
7.1. Political and Economic Pressure and Incentives for post-Soviet States to Reduce or Halt Cooperation with Iran.....	263
7.1.1. <i>US Pressure and Incentives Aimed at Making Russia Stop Cooperation with Iran</i>	264
7.1.2. <i>Russia's Cooperation with Iran and Major Issues of National Security (European Missile System and Arms Reduction)</i>	270

7.1.3. <i>US Political Pressure and Incentives for Ukraine and Belarus Concerning their Cooperation with Iran</i>	274
7.1.4. <i>Israeli Pressure and Incentives to Make Post-Soviet States Stop Cooperation with Iran</i>	275
7.1.5. <i>Pressure and Incentives from Arab Countries to Make Post-Soviet States Stop Cooperation with Iran</i>	278
7.2. US Sanctions Imposed for Cooperation with Iran.....	283
7.3. Covert Actions of Third Parties Opposing Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Countries.....	288
7.4. Conclusions.....	291
8. Iran's Nuclear Programme and Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Nations	295
8.1. Iranian Nuclear Efforts and Nuclear Cooperation with (F)SU Nations.....	297
8.1.1. <i>Interaction over Nuclear Issues in 2002-2005: Beginning of the Crisis over Iran's Nuclear Programme</i>	299
8.1.2. <i>Interaction over Nuclear Issues in 2006-2010: Mounting Pressure on Iran</i> ...	303
8.1.3. <i>Interaction over Nuclear Issues in the 2010s: Resolution of the Crisis over Iran's Nuclear Programme</i>	313
8.2. Russian Concern over Iran's Nuclear Ambitions.....	314
8.3. (F)SU Nations' Concerns Regarding Iran's Nuclear Programme and Pressure from Third Parties.....	316
8.4. Conclusions.....	321
9. Afterword	323
References	336
Appendices	381

Tables

Table 1. Aircraft and Ammunition Transfers between the USSR and Iran in 1990-1991.

Table 2. Dynamics of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and the Soviet Union/Russian Federation.

Table 3. Dynamics of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and Ukraine.

Table 4. Dynamics of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and Belarus.

Table 5. Iran's Military Expenditures in 1988-2015.

Table 6. Membership of the Soviet Union in International Organisations and Associations in 1989-1991.

Table 7. Index of the Soviet Union's Engagement with the West.

Table 8. Membership of Russia in International Organisations and Associations, 1992-2015.

Table 9. Membership of Ukraine in International Organisations and Associations, 1992-2015.

Table 10. Membership of Belarus in International Organisations and Associations, 1992-2015.

Table 11. Index of Engagement of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus with the West, 1992-2015.

Table 12. Comparison of Soviet and Russian relations with Iran and the West.

Table 13. Comparison of Ukrainian relations with Iran and the West.

Table 14. Comparison of Belarusian relations with Iran and the West.

Table 15. Major Issues of Strategic Cooperation and Competition between Iran and (F)SU Nations at Regional and International Levels in 1989-2015.

Table 16. Nationality of post-Soviet entities and persons sanctioned in 1998-2015 because of their suspected involvement in defence-related cooperation with Iran (on conventional weapons).

Table 17. US Sanctions imposed against Russian Entities and Persons.

Table 18. US Sanctions imposed against Belarusian Entities and Persons.

Table 19. Actions of Third Parties Targeting Non-WMD Weapons, Technologies and Expertise Transfers from (F)SU Nations to Iran and Soviet and Russian relations with Iran.

Table 20. The Actions of Third Parties Targeting Non-WMD Weapons, Technologies and Expertise Transfers from (F)SU Nations to Iran and Ukrainian-Iranian Defence-Related Cooperation.

Table 21. Actions of Third Parties Targeting Non-WMD Weapons, Technologies and Expertise Transfers from (F)SU Nations to Iran and Belarusian-Iranian Defence-Related Cooperation.

Table 22. Major International Political Developments surrounding Iran's Nuclear Programme and Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Nations in 1992-2015.

Table 23. Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation between (F)SU Nations and Iran.

Figures

Figure 1. Iran's Military Expenditures in 1988-2015.

Figure 2. Index of Engagement with the West of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in 1992-2015.

Figure 3. US Sanctions Imposed against Entities and Persons of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus because of suspected cooperating with Iran, 1997-2015.

Maps

Map 1. Comparative Geographical Location of the USSR and Iran.

Map 2. Comparative Geographical Location of the Russian Federation and Iran.

Map 3. Comparative Geographical Location of Ukraine, Belarus and Iran.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Transfers of Military Equipment from Soviet Union to Iran in 1989-1991.

Appendix 2. Transfers of Military Equipment from Russia to Iran.

Appendix 3. Transfers of Military Equipment from Ukraine to Iran.

Appendix 4. Transfers of Military Equipment from Belarus to Iran.

Appendix 5. An Overview of Soviet-Iranian Defence-Related Cooperation before the 1979 Revolution.

Appendix 6. Russian-Iranian Trade in Commodities in the 2000s and 2010s.

Appendix 7. Ukrainian-Iranian Trade in Commodities in the 2000s and 2010s.

Appendix 8. Belarusian-Iranian Trade in Commodities in the 2000s and 2010s.

Appendix 9. List of US Sanctions Imposed against Post-Soviet Entities and Private Persons for Defence-Related Cooperation with Iran Involving non-WMD Military Equipment and Technologies.

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List of Acronyms

- ACS – The Aeronautical Certification Society
- AEOI – The Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran
- AH -- anno Hegirae, the Hijri year (only solar Hijri calendar is used here)
- Antonov ASTC - Antonov Aeronautical Scientific-Technical Complex (ANTK im. Antonova)
- ATGM – Anti-Tank Guided Missile
- bcm – Billion of Cubic Meters
- CAST – The Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies
- CICA – The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia
- CIS – The Commonwealth of Independent States
- COCOM – The Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls
- CPSU – The Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- CSTO – The Collective Security Treaty Organisation
- DPKI – The Democratic Party of Kurdistan (Iran)
- GCC – The Gulf Cooperation Council
- GECF – The Gas Exporting Countries Forum
- HESA - Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (Sherkat-e Sanaye Havapeymasazi-ye Iran)
- HPP – Hydroelectric Power Plant
- IACI – Iranian Aircraft Industries Company (*see* HESA)
- IAEA – The International Atomic Energy Agency
- IEM – International Eurasian Movement
- ILSA – The Iran and Libya Sanctions Act
- INKSNA – The Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act,
- INPA – The Iran Non-Proliferation Act
- Iras – The Iran Eurasia Research Institute, also known as the Institute of Iran Eurasian Research
- IRGC – The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
- IRGCAF – The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Air Force
- IRI – The Islamic Republic of Iran
- IRIAF – The Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force
- ISIL (or ISIS) – The Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
- JCPOA – The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
- KMDB – Kharkiv Morozov Machine Building Design Bureau
- MAPO – The Moscow Aircraft Production Association
- MKO – The Mojaheddin-e Khalgh Organisation

MLRS – Multiple-Launch Rocket System
MODAFL – Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics
MUT – Malek-Ashtar University of Technology
MWe – Megawatt electrical, a unit of electric power output
NIKIET – N.A. Dollezhal Research and Development Institute of Power Engineering
NPP – Nuclear Power Plant
PfP – The Partnership for Peace
PRC – The People's Republic of China
ROSATOM – The Federal Agency on Atomic Energy (*in 2004-2007*); Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation (*since December 2007*)
SAM – Surface-to-air missile
SBU – The Security Service of Ukraine
SCO – The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SRBM – Short-range ballistic missile
TISRI – The Tehran International Studies & Research Institute
VVER-1000 – The water-water 1000 MWe energetic reactor
WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction

1. Introduction

1.1. Description of the Issue

After the end of the Iran-Iraq War in the late 1980s, Iranian leadership found itself in a difficult international situation, facing continuous obstruction and bogged down in protracted confrontation with the West. Its national security situation was equally dire: regional instability on its borders exacerbated separatist conflicts and encouraged the activities of armed oppositional groups threatening to undermine stability inside the country.

It was now up to Tehran to keep the Islamic republic afloat, maintain the regime, and defend Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity. To this end, the country needed robust military equipped with modern weaponry and supplied with the necessary materiel. Preferably, Iran would need to produce its own armaments, equipment and ammunition domestically. This would become a major part of the general doctrine of economic self-sufficiency proclaimed by the leaders of the Islamic republic in the 1980s. It would continue – both as a slogan and an effective policy – throughout the 1990s and well into the 2010s.

However, Iran had very little defence production of its own at the beginning of the period under consideration. Although the Shah had an interest in a modern army and weaponry, he tended mostly to buy ready-to-use items from the West, abandoning a mid-1970s project to build a sophisticated jet fighter in Iran. Thus, after 1989, as the country entered the “Epoch of Reconstruction,” its armed forces, and especially its defence industries, were still under construction. Looking for an opportunity to satisfy its military needs, the Iranian government managed to sign a series of contracts with the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to a marked increase in opportunities for the Iranian government to acquire weaponry, technologies, materials and expertise from former Soviet republics. The disintegration of well-developed Soviet armed forces and defence industries left many production lines and facilities without due supervision and qualified specialists without jobs. The institutions and production lines responsible for military research and design were concentrated in three western Soviet republics: Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The overwhelming majority of relevant experts also originated from these three republics and largely remained there after the collapse of the USSR.

Several factors contributed to a completely new security landscape in the Middle East, Caspian Region and Persian Gulf: the aspiration of the Iranian government to strengthen its

own defence capacities, the collapse of Soviet Union – along with the ensuing economic troubles, and the emergence of numerous new actors in defence markets. These factors also added a new dimension to anti-Western alliances in the world.

Studying the process of transfer of Soviet and post-Soviet military equipment, expertise and technology means studying the actors of a formerly unified Soviet economic and political system. Not all parts of the Soviet Union had an important share in the military industry; most production facilities were located in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Although their capacities differed significantly, their industries were complementary and remain so to a very large degree. This means that it is necessary to study their defence cooperation with Iran as a group.

However, it does not mean glossing over the importance of their policy differences – quite the opposite, it shall be underlined that their policies in defence cooperation with Iran have frequently been contradictory both amongst themselves and even amongst different agencies in the same government. Nevertheless, these countries had to coordinate their policies because of the benefits such coordination provided.

1.2. Rationale for the Dissertation Topic

A better understanding of the role post-Soviet countries played in building up Iranian defence potential has global, regional and national importance. It contributes to the study of security issues in the Middle East and post-Soviet region, as well as to the study of the foreign policies of the four nations concerned: Iran, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus.

The growing military potential of developing countries may present a challenge to international relations and security in the coming decades. The sanctions placed on Iran in various forms since the revolution, *inter alia*, aimed to limit the military and defence capabilities of the Islamic Republic. However, Iran was able to neutralise some of these measures and build up its defence capacities while relying on both domestic and foreign sources. Specifically, Iran took advantage of opportunities to work with newly independent states that were disposing of their advanced military equipment, expertise and technologies to acquire what it needed. Studying how and why Iran succeeded or failed in this endeavour provides valuable insight regarding proliferation problems which concern not only Iran or the Middle East, but reach far beyond it.

Cooperation with Iran was an issue for the national political agendas of the three above-mentioned post-Soviet nations. Clarifying the issues of defence cooperation helps elucidate

the dynamics of the foreign relations of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and sheds light on why and how they collaborated with Iran by supplying it with the military expertise and technologies it sought. Moreover, better understanding the defence build-up in Iran is crucial to studying the development of Iran as a regional power and assessing changes in its defence capacities.

1.3. Objective of the Dissertation

The subject of this study is defence cooperation between Iran and three post-Soviet countries. It shall be considered in the framework of both international relations and international security issues. The research project deals with conventional arms and their design, development and production technologies, other military and military-related know-how and equipment. Technologies, know-how, materials and equipment of possible dual use will also be considered to ensure more comprehensive understanding of the relations between these nations. This dissertation shall not address nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

The dissertation topic relates to two broader discussions: the defence build-up and growing strength of developing countries, some of whom pursue a confrontation course with the West, and arms and military technology transfers and armaments control.

1.4. State of Research

Existing research on defence cooperation between Iran and post-Soviet nations is largely diplomatic-historical and descriptive. Only a small number of smaller works have attempted to study the issues addressed here using a conceptual framework and thus qualifying as political science studies.

As no full-fledged study on this theme has been identified, great efforts were undertaken to use partly relevant pieces of scholarly and analytical works, which, strictly speaking, deal with related yet separate issues: the development of Iran's military, Iran's foreign policy and bilateral relations with (F)SU nations. Certain aspects of the issue have been discussed in studies and analytical papers from the realms of security studies, international relations and foreign policy.

1.4.1. Development and Modernisation of Iranian Defence Capacities

A series of publications produced by Anthony Cordesman (sometimes along with co-authors) is the most important body of work for the general aspects of the theme of this dissertation. He has analysed the Iranian military, defence industries and Iranian foreign contacts in the military sphere starting in the late 1980s, speaking and writing for various

US and international media outlets, as well as regularly summarising his observations in book form. He produced five such larger publications concerning the period under consideration, which are, however, largely repetitions of one another.

Thus, the book *Iran and Iraq: the threat from the northern Gulf* (Cordesman 1994), as the author himself admits in the introductory chapter, draws heavily from Cordesman's 1993 book *After the Storm: The Changing Military Balance in the Middle East*. The expert and scholarly community generally lauded Cordesman's 1994 book, and one review described *Iran and Iraq: the threat from the northern Gulf* as "the best available open assessment of the military strengths and weaknesses of Iran and Iraq" (Haijar 1996).

Cordesman discusses every branch of the armed forces in Iran and Iraq in great detail: their organisational structure, manpower parameters, equipment, deployment patterns, expansion plans, issues of arms transfers, industrialisation and military-related imports. In addition, he thoroughly analyses the programmes of weapons of mass destruction in these countries and tries to identify the nature of the threat which Iraq and Iran posed to the region.

In his book, Cordesman assesses indigenous Iraqi weapons production capacities as greater than Iranian ones but points out that Iran had considerable naval forces inherited from the Shah's times. In the author's opinion, Iran in the early 1990s also possessed more opportunities to acquire arms and defence-related technologies, knowledge, know-how and expertise from Russia, China, North Korea and some developing countries than Iraq, due to the isolation of the latter as a result of international sanctions. Cordesman reminds us that Iran was methodically building up its armed forces; in addition to massive purchases, the Iranian leadership had changed the command structure of its national armed forces to make them more efficient and ease tensions between the army and the IRGC.

Meanwhile, Cordesman devotes a special chapter to weapons of mass destruction, in which he reviews in an alarmist vein Iran's alleged capabilities in this domain, including its "nuclear weapons" programmes. According to him, Iran had chemical war capabilities, probably worked on the development of biological weapons (although hardly possessed advanced biological weapons), and could have gained nuclear capability in a decade. Alleged, Iranian (and Iraqi) WMD programmes, including delivery systems, resulted in a serious threat both to oil transportation and maritime communications as well as to neighbouring states and states with vital interests in the region.

However, Cordesman failed to provide a broader strategic picture to put the Iranian and Iraqi military build-ups into the larger Middle Eastern context. After all, military

competition in the Persian Gulf region was taking place between the three nations – Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia – and was complicated by the strategic involvement of other outside states in the region (Israel, Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan, etc.). In particular, the author fails to adequately (if at all) discuss the probably legitimate security needs and threat perceptions of Iran and Iraq due to massive arms purchases by neighbouring Arab states, the US military presence in the Persian Gulf, and Israeli ambitions and actions in the Middle East.

This is an important failure, as the role of outside states (not located in the Persian Gulf region) is a decisive one for defence plans and the perceived needs of Iran. This flaw is especially conspicuous against the backdrop of Cordesman's thorough discussion of internal security threats to the Iranian state, including the legitimacy of the Iranian government, potential economic and political problems, and guerrilla, dissident and terrorist activities.

Commenting on the ongoing Iranian military build-up, Cordesman advocates a two-pronged approach of incentives and restrictions. He warned that the conventional military build-up in Iran should not be considered “clearly aggressive or linked to an unalterable search for regional hegemony. Iran can scarcely be expected to accept the force levels it had at the end of the Iran-Iraq War” (Cordesman 1994: 116). Nevertheless, Cordesman supported measures limiting Iran's access to "dual-use" technology and advanced weapons (in particular long-range attack aircraft, surface-to-surface and anti-ship missiles, and submarines) while resisting containment of Iran in political, economic and cultural domains” (Cordesman 1994: 117 and *passim*).

His next book, *Iran: Dilemmas of Dual Containment*, co-written with Ahmed Hashim, was published in 1997 (Cordesman and Hashim 1997). The book presented little more than an inventory or overview of Iranian military potential without much conceptual framing, albeit containing some analysis of the US “dual containment” policy.

In the introduction, the authors describe dual containment as a policy and underline that it isolated America more than Iran. The first chapters are devoted to the internal problems of Iran, followed by a review of Iran's external relations. Seven final chapter of the book deal with description and analysis of Iranian military capabilities (chapters 8-14). According to the analysts, it "will be some years before Iran can become a major conventional military threat" to neighbouring nations or the West (Cordesman and Hashim 1997: 263). At the same time, Iran's "efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction are probably the most threatening aspect of Iran's present and future military capabilities" (Cordesman and

Hashim 1997: 266). Essentially, the book is a careful compilation of available information on Iranian armed forces. Certain information ostensibly came from Western insider sources, but Iranian sources were not used.

In 1999, Cordesman published an updated compilation of data assessing Iranian military capacities entitled *Iran's Military Forces in Transition: Conventional Threats and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Cordesman 1999). It covered Iranian armed forces, arms programmes and defence industries.

In this book Cordesman pointed out that by the late 1990s Tehran's perception of security threats had changed, causing change in Iran's procurement and military development priorities. Iranian leadership still regarded Iraq as the biggest threat, but its procurement priorities proved that Tehran was now striving to prepare itself for possible confrontation with the US and its allies in the region. To bolster this claim, Cordesman points out that Iran had acquired anti-ship missiles and submarines. It had also worked on further development of its ballistic missiles, mine warfare, and other capabilities necessary to confront American and allied forces in the Persian Gulf. He also argues that Iran was working on strengthening its WMD programme.

Nevertheless, limited financing and a restricted range of sources hampered the development of the Iranian armed forces. Cordesman emphasises the lack of unity between the IRGC and the army as well as the lack of ideological unity and coherent operational concepts. This adversely affected the fighting capacities of Iran's military. He also doubts whether the experience Iran gained from war with Iraq would help Iranians in a confrontation with the US and their allies.

In his assessment, the author provides only limited details and facts to make his points. Instead, he frequently refers to reports of dubious veracity. The insufficient conceptual framework and limited explanatory attempts are accompanied with dozens of pages of data compilations (e.g., Chapter 11 *Iran and Weapons of Mass Destruction* contains two pages of analysis and 42 pages of tables referring to many reports from probably biased sources).

One of the book's main theses is Cordesman's belief that the West had managed to restrict Iran's modern weapons purchases and this rendered Iran vulnerable in military regard. The author painstakingly reviews the US sanctions on Iran and the role of China and Russia as sources of defence-related products and technologies. According to him the US succeeded in halting Russian exports to Iran and the latter set out to achieve greater self-sufficiency. However, Cordesman casts doubt on Iranian statements regarding self-sufficiency in the

defence sphere as far as any sophisticated items and platforms are concerned. He points out that Iran did not allocate sufficient funds to maintain its present forces or to replace equipment as it was lost. Paradoxically, Cordesman nonetheless believed that funding was enough for Iran to remain a regional power and develop WMD.

Anthony Cordesman published other books on Iranian military capabilities based on multiple reports of his from 2005 and 2007 (Cordesman 2005 and 2007). Both books are updated compilations of data on Iranian armed forces and are probably even more descriptive and a-theoretical than his earlier works. Interestingly enough, almost no reviews can be found on these two books in scholarly publications – in stark contrast to many other books by Cordesman. The list of Cordesman's published works is very long but they all suffer from excessive descriptiveness and a lack of theoretical framework, alongside their failure to make thorough use of non-Western sources. Furthermore, Cordesman has a general penchant to consider the security situation in terms of US and American allies' interests, which in the case of the Persian Gulf primarily entails the GCC member states.

The development of Iran's defence industries has also been analysed by John Shields (1996) and D. Faizullayev (2008), although the latter minimised discussion of Russia's role in this process. In his 2008 article, published in *Aziya i Afrika segodnya*, the leading Russian review on Asian and African studies, Faizullayev concludes: “current capacities of Iran's defence industry provide for minimal necessary opportunities to pursue the policy of deterring potential aggressor [...] the path walked by Iran's military industrial complex in 1989 – 2008 is really impressive. ”

Some studies have been published on lesser issues related to Iran's military modernisation. Thus, in a minor publication, Frigate Captain V. Mosalev analysed the Iranian armoury and briefly discussed the role of Russia as a source of weapons technologies in the modernisation of Iran's mechanised armoured vehicles (Mosalev 2002). In a more popular and journalistic publication Babak Taghvaei analysed the modernisation of the MiG-29 and Su-22 fighter and bomber jets of the Iranian air force, mentioning the possible role played by post-Soviet firms and experts in overhauling the Iranian aircraft (Taghvaei 2012 & 2014).

The modernisation and strengthening of Iran's defence potential was the result not only of confrontation with the US and the necessity to restock its armoury after the war, it was also a follow-up – despite the disruption of revolution – to the Shah-era military modernisation of Iranian armed forces. In the early 1980s Stephanie Neuman studied Iranian arms

purchases and the development of Iran's defence industries under the Shah (Neuman 1981). She arrived at a sceptical conclusion: "... self-sufficiency in weapons production is beyond the reach of less developed countries. Domestic production creates other dependencies." However, "dependence and independence are relative, not absolute, values. Well-endowed states have more leverage than other states" (Neuman 1981: 145).

Steven Canby also critically analysed the potential defence needs and actual modernisation of Iranian armed forces under the Shah. He underlined that the radical modernisation of the military raised three questions: "(1) the military's 'back-end' ability to absorb the new equipment and force increases; (2) the competitive 'sideways' impact on the civil economy; (3) 'front-end' military appropriateness." He continued to warn that: "little relationship may exist between sophistication [*in weapons*] and [*military*] usefulness and [*military and political*] power may be more apparent than real. [...] Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Shah's armed forces. They were ill suited for all but one of their intended tasks: political symbolism" (Canby 1981: 100). Even after the revolution, the problems pointed out by Canby continued to plague the Iranian armed forces into the following decades.

Modernisation of the Iranian military and defence industries cannot be properly studied without noting the doctrines and views of Iranian defence planners. Steven Ward analyses Iran's military doctrine. He argues that: "Iran's military has tried to develop concepts for warfighting suitable for deterring the United States while dealing with a complex security environment and numerous constraints on its military power. The military's key task has been to align doctrine with service capabilities." According to him, Tehran might be over-relying on missile-based deterrence and the threat of unconventional and proxy war (Ward 2005: 559).

Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin and Miranda Priebe consider Iranian missile threat in more detail and conclude that it was rather limited, even for the relatively soft targets of Iran's immediate neighbour like oil installations in Saudi Arabia, although transfer of advanced technologies to Iran could make the situation more menacing (Itzkowitz Shiffrin and Priebe 2011). Shahram Chubin was another to analyse the national security policies of Iran. He also points to the US as Tehran's main preoccupation: "the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower confronts Iran with genuine problems that admit no clear solutions" (Chubin 1994: 5).

The collective 2001 monograph *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era*, by Daniel Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushirvan Ehteshami and Jerrold Green (Byman et al.

2001) analyses the interaction between the military and society, e.g., the armed forces' attitude towards the government. The authors emphasised the loyalty of the military to the government and civilian leadership's firm control over the armed forces. However, they also underline the chaos and anarchy prevalent in security decision-making and the differences in the agendas of various security services, even in regard to foreign countries. The analysts conclude that Iran's security apparatus is inclined to demonstrate force rather than enter actual confrontation; Iran pursues pragmatic foreign policies hidden behind ideological rhetoric (with the exception of relations with Israel and the US). This book is also peculiar for its methodology – it is based on interviews with “knowledgeable Iranians in the United States, in Europe and in Iran.” Unfortunately, this comes without thorough cross-checking against known facts.

Said Amir Arjomand discusses Iranian foreign policy and some aspects of the development of the Iranian military (especially the rise of military-security personnel in the mid-2000s) after the revolution using a sociological approach (Arjomand 2009). Although he limits himself to only a few conclusions, Arjomand outlines certain developments which shall be considered in this study of Iranian military modernisation and foreign policy after the war with Iraq. As he argues: “after the failure of the policy of export of revolution in the early 1980s, the most aggressive phase of Iran's foreign policy occurred with the ascendancy of the hardliners among the Revolutionary Guards under Ahmadinejad” (Arjomand 2009: 14-15).

The militarisation of the Iranian government through the rise of the Revolutionary Guards is also the subject of an article by Kazem Alamdari (Alamdari 2005), and the ascendancy of the Guards in Iran's politics was analysed in a major study by Rand Corporation (Wehrey et al. 2009). All these studies, however, almost completely ignore issues of military-technical development.

1.4.2. Modernisation of Iranian Defence Capacities and Iran's Relations with the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Nations

Although there are numerous papers published on Iran's relations with former Soviet nations, even their general tendencies require more thorough study. Arguably, the most comprehensive outline of Iranian relations with the (former) Soviet Union nations is that of Shireen Hunter (Hunter 2010).

However, her book aims more at summarising information on these relations and makes only the most general conclusions, which are occasionally dubious. For example, the scholar argues: “Iran's relations with East European countries continued to stagnate under

Ahmadinejad as they had under the Rafsanjani and Khatami presidencies, reflecting the dramatically changed political nature of these countries and their foreign policy orientation. The only country of the former Eastern Bloc with which Iran has maintained considerable economic and political ties is Belarus, which has not undergone a democratic transformation and has strained relations with the West” (Hunter 2010: 74). Actually, bilateral relations flourished under Khatami and saw no special improvement under Ahmadinejad, while remaining much more limited than for example relations between Iran and Ukraine (even considering the size of the countries).

a) Iranian Foreign Policy

Iranian scholarship on foreign policy devotes much more attention to relations with the West and the Gulf nations than to relations with post-Soviet relations. For this study, both the general framework of Iran's foreign policy and Tehran's vision of relations with the post-Soviet nations shall be considered.

The most sophisticated conceptual framework for studying Iran's foreign policy is probably that developed by Ruhollah Ramazani (Ramazani 1388; 1989; 1992; 2013); a series of books published by the government-affiliated Centre for Islamic Revolution Documentation contains a general outline of Iran's foreign policy (Sedqi 2007 (1386); 2013 (1392); and Ya'qubi 1387). General monographs by Ali-Reza Azghandi (Azghandi 1388) and Seyed Jalal Dehghani Firouzabadi (Firouzabadi 1389), as well as the collective work “Iran and the International System” edited by Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Reza Molavi (Ehteshami and Molavi 2012), contain more comprehensive concepts and theories of the foreign policies of post-revolutionary Iran.

These publications present the most general preconditions and factors of Iranian foreign policy. When it comes to particular directions of Iranian external relations, a publication prepared by Ehteshami and Molavi considers only the specific cases of Iran's relations with the US, EU and Mediterranean countries, while books by Azghandi and Firouzabadi extensively cover Iranian relations with the West and the Persian Gulf region, and contain little information on cooperation between Iran and post-Soviet nations, while keeping almost total silence on the issue of defence-related cooperation.

These works present important insights which sometimes reflect the views and perceptions of the Iranian government and government-affiliated experts and practitioners. For example, Ali Reza Azghandi notes in his book that although in 1991 Iran no longer had to worry about the northern Soviet super-power: “after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran became surrounded from four sides by [*the US*] and its regional allies” (Azghandi 1388:

28).

Jalal Dehghani Firouzabadi concedes in his works that the defence needs of Iran determined its foreign policy as well. He emphasised that though the armed forces in Iran were under the control of civilian officials, “that does not mean lack of influence from the Islamic Republic's army and Revolutionary Guards in the process of decision- and policy-making concerning foreign policy. The armed forces, especially the Revolutionary Guards due to the triple reasons of their existence and their aims – i.e. implementation of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, the aims of the Islamic republic, and confrontation with security threats enclosing the country – play an explicit part in foreign policy.” (Firouzabadi 1389: 290-291)

Mehran Kamrava discusses the link between foreign policy and security policy while analysing Iranian policy toward the Persian Gulf. He notes, “One of the most prominent features of Iran's regional posture is the securitization of its foreign policy over the last three decades or so, itself a direct product of the militarization of the country's immediate environment” (Kamrava 2011: 185-186). Meanwhile, according to Kamrava: “Iranian foreign and national security policies, in relation both to Iran's immediate neighborhood and to the larger global arena, are influenced far more by pragmatic, balance-of-power considerations than by ideological or supposedly “revolutionary” pursuits” (Kamrava 2011: 184). Discussing the Gulf region, he argues that “the Saudi factor” and American presence largely determine Tehran's regional policy.

Amir Haji-Yousefi analyses Iranian foreign policy in the southern post-Soviet republics applying a neorealist approach. In particular, he notes:

“The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Central Asia and the Caucasus has been shaped by a necessity felt by Iran, i.e., the necessity to strategically cooperate with Russia in a confrontation with America. [Iran] resorted to conventional policy of alliance and resulting partial balancing [...] It was because of this necessity that the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Central Asia and Caucasus was a policy based on a pragmatic [amalgam] and conservative course.” (Haji Yousefi 1381: 1025-1026)

Given that this article appeared in a review published by Iran's Foreign Ministry, it can qualify as an insight into the mind-set of the Iranian political establishment.

b) Russia-Iran

The most thorough study of relations between Iran and Russia focusing on the Iranian perspective is by Jahangir Karami. In a 2010 article (Karami 1389), he describes twenty

years of cooperation between the two countries in various spheres, considering the internal, regional and global preconditions shaping it. He proceeds to analyse and study Iran's new geopolitical situation (distancing Russia from Iranian borders) as an important and decisive variable. He aims to study the influence of geopolitical transformations on bilateral cooperation between 1988-2009.

In an earlier article (2009), Karami optimistically characterises Russo-Iranian relations thus: "Achieving stability in Central Eurasia has a promising history with 15 years of coexistence and cooperation among Iran, Russia and other countries in the region". In the article, he analyses the opportunities for regional peace and cooperation using the "social-constructivist" approach. Moreover, he discusses views on regional cooperation held by the Iranian government, academia and society.

Elaheh Koolae presents another view of Iran's Russia policies (Koolae 2008). Although not as well-referenced as the article by Karami, it is still important due to Koolae's long-time proximity to reformist political leadership and parliamentary activities, as well as his engagement in Iranian policy on division of the Caspian Sea.

Mohammad Hassan Mahdiyan produced probably the most comprehensive account of Russo-Iranian relations (Mahdiyan 2014); however, it lacks theoretical framework and conceptualisation. His book, which is written from a semi-official Iranian point of view, contains interesting discussion and description of military-technical cooperation and arms deals between Moscow and Tehran. However, the detail-heavy book is inconclusive: for example, the book informs its readers about the signing of contracts for submarine repairs in 2008-2010 but fails to say whether they were implemented, and so forth. The author of the book was an insider to Iranian diplomacy: for many years Mahdiyan worked in the Iranian Foreign Ministry and the Iranian embassy to Moscow.

John W. Parker presents a very detailed account of Russo-Iranian relations (2009) demonstrating more conceptualisation and theorising. However, his book takes the perspective of a US official, while also focusing more heavily on Russia than Iran. This is unsurprising, as its author served from 1974-2010 in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. He held several senior positions including stints in the US embassy in Moscow. The book is additionally valuable for its interviews with policy experts.

The book's general thesis is that although both governments oppose US foreign policy, Russo-Iranian relations failed to result in a full-fledged alliance because of serious differences between the two countries. Furthermore, Russian and Iranian elites display

“ultimate preference” for “better ties with the United States rather than with one another” (Parker 2009: 297).

Parker emphasises that despite some early attempts by Tehran to promote the Islamic republic model in the former Soviet Muslim republics, Moscow and Tehran arrived at a limited consensus following the civil war in Tajikistan. Thus: “Moscow told Tehran that Tajikistan was in Russia's sphere of influence, and Iran recognised this. At the same time, Russia agreed Iran could be active in Tajikistan” (*Ibid*: 87).

The author implies that a certain *laissez-fair* attitude on the part of the Kremlin followed. After Moscow and Tehran reached a deal, arms trade “expanded beyond state control to include illicit nuclear and missile technologies” (*Ibid*: 103). According to Parker, Russo-Iranian cooperation was at its apex in the 1990s under Yeltsin and Clinton; differences between Moscow and Tehran increased after Putin came to power.

Hannes Adomeit presents a much more succinct but nevertheless multidimensional and accurate account of Russo-Iranian relations. He also analyses the military-technical cooperation, underlining:

“Likewise, political considerations have put severe restrictions on Russian arms exports to Iran: deliveries are limited as far as the quality and quantity are concerned, they serve defensive needs and they do not cause any decisive changes in military balance in the Near and Middle East.” (Adomeit 2009: 31)

In another paper, Adomeit notes: “However, the hope that Russia would replace the US in the long term as supplier of modern weapons [*for Iranian armed forces*], did not materialise” (Adomeit 2007: 21). His works, however, focus on the 2000s and aim to provide a current political analysis; this drastically diminishes their scholarly value.

Analysing Russian-Israeli relations in an overview article, Robert O. Freedman investigates the domestic and international context and regional priorities of Russian policy towards the Middle East in the early and mid-1990s (Freedman 1998). Freedman also explicitly points out that issues concerning the transfer of Russian missile technologies to Iran were linked by Israeli officials to projects in the energy domain. This led to the cancellation of one relatively big deal between Russia and Israel.

Mehdi Parvizi implicitly discusses the interrelation between issues of arms sales, energy, and nuclear and missile technologies in Russian-Iranian relations, along with US intervention aimed at counteracting cooperation directions in the Caspian Sea region (Amineh 1999: 112-115). The link between Iran's nuclear missile program and Russo-

Iranian relations has also been discussed by Sergey Minasyan. He identifies three main factors shaping Russia's position: the commitment of Russia to non-proliferation of WMD; the interests of Russian exporters (mainly of the defence industries and nuclear engineering firms); and the political priorities of Russia in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia (Minasyan 2002: 254-255). Gidadhubli (2003) undertakes a very brief exploration of cooperation between Russian arms exporting and oil producing companies in foreign markets.

In the early 2010s, the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies carried out a study on relations between Russia, Iran and Turkey. The study focuses heavily on energy and contains very little discussion of defence cooperation. According to the authors, "Russia makes no pretext of being a Middle Eastern power, and it pursues a more transactional strategy in the region. Russia's legacy interests translate into arms sales, and it seeks to influence energy transit routes to minimize competition with its own downstream supplies and distribution to Europe." (Brenner 2013: 4) They also underline Moscow's support of the Security Council Resolution 1929 against Tehran, its refusal to deliver an air defence system to Iran and the subsequent deterioration of relations between Iran and Russia (Brenner 2013: 9). However, the authors fail to elaborate on this issue. Moreover, according to the published proceedings: "Though Iran looked to Russia as an arms supplier and counterweight to the U.S.-led push for sanctions on its nuclear program, it has also sought to cultivate ties with Georgia as a potential outlet to European markets" (Brenner 2013: 17).

The "strategic partnership" between Russia and Iran has been studied in some detail by Adam Tarock (1997) and Anna Pambukhchyan (2012). However, Tarock's article deals only with the early to mid-1990s, concluding that by 1997, "Russia and Iran [had] moved towards a much closer relationship than at any time since the Iranian revolution of 1979, based on pragmatic and strategic considerations". He goes on to list the main factors behind the rapprochement. For Russia, these include her efforts to earn foreign currency and maintain friendly relations with the state bordering the newly independent countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. For Iran, these include its wish to boost its own military potential by buying Russian defence products, purchasing new technologies and gaining Moscow's political support in the region and globally (Tarock 1997: 207). Tarock also specifically analyses Russian-Iranian relations in the context of Russia's Middle East policy since 1993 and "its drive to capture, in some cases to recapture, the arms bazaar, particularly in the Persian Gulf region" (*Ibid*: 208).

Pambukhchyan's study focuses on the identity factor. She argues that the self-perception of Iran and Russia has significantly influenced their bilateral relations. However, her study is based on a very limited range of sources. She underlines that behind the facade of a strategic partnership, Tehran and Moscow competed and collided on multiple issues related to energy, Iran's nuclear program, and lately Iranian attempts to acquire advanced weaponry.

Helen Belopolsky's book *Russia and the Challengers: Russian Alignment with China, Iran and Iraq in the Unipolar Era* (2009) is a large-scale publication dealing with the period of 1992-2005. She discusses four major dimensions of relations between the respective countries: economic dimensions, global dimensions, regional dimensions and Russian domestic security. Belopolsky argues that in the case of Russian-Iranian relations on the regional level (for example vis-a-vis Russian-Iraqi relations), Russian economy-related ministries and commercial lobbies were initially the most important players immediately following the demise of the Soviet Union.

However, she underlines the importance of the global dimension and Russia's struggle to preserve its great power status. In her words: "[I]n the challenger states, Russia has found friends which help to facilitate its survival" and its "resistance to decline, resistance to fragility and resistance to a system of international relations in which it is a marginal, regional power" (Belopolsky 2009: 175). Thus, the Russian-Iranian relationship was essentially used by Moscow to balance against American global domination.

US policy was a crucial factor in the development of these relations. After relations between Moscow and Washington deteriorated in the mid-1990s, Russia began to express ever more interest in relations with governments which confronted the US. The US government's policy of interventionism, NATO expansion, abrogation of the ABM Treaty, and increasing threats against Iraq and Iran succeeded in bringing Russia and the so called "challenger" states into "more proactive collusion in defying the US" (*Ibid*: 181).

Nevertheless, Belopolsky emphasises Russia's general inclination to bandwagon and seek compromise with the US. Russia repeatedly avoided seriously damaging its relations with the US (because of its interaction with challenger states) even in most critical cases (*Ibid*: 182).

Some important Russian scholarship on bilateral relations does exist, particularly with regard to defence cooperation. A semi-official view of the defence cooperation between Russia and various countries of the world, including Iran, is presented in a book edited by former Russian prime minister Sergey Stepashin (2002). The book deals not only with the

state of this aspect of Russia's foreign relations, but also discusses its place in Russia's military doctrine and defence policy, as well as its significance for the Russian defence industry.

Another collective monograph on Russia's defence cooperation is one edited by Alexander Rybas (2008). It includes a section on Iran and presents a more critical view than the book edited by Stepashin, yet even contributions by leading Russian defence analysts (like Konstantin Makienko or Ruslan Puhov) do not satisfy the minimal requirements of scholarly study of the issue, being explicitly analytical and/or polemical.

The new “Eastern Policy” conducted by Vladimir Putin during his second presidential term is examined in a book by Sergey Luzyanin (2007). It contains a detailed section on relations with Tehran and a subsection on military technical cooperation and its prospects. This publication follows the tenets of diplomatic history and its discussion of Russo-Iranian relationship is fragmentary (it fails to compare achievements or discuss implementation and related difficulties).

Another contribution to scholarship on Russian-Iranian relations, by Yelena Dunayeva, consists of a collection of articles on Iran under Ahmadinejad. It briefly analyses political interaction in the late 2000s and early 2010s and focuses on the nuclear issue. It only mentions military-technical cooperation in passing (Dunayeva 2013). Meanwhile, an article by Nikolai Kozyrev comprises a general description, a rather chaotic collection of facts related to bilateral relations and some basic analysis of political and diplomatic interaction (Kozyrev 2008). Still, this piece is highly valuable for research on the issue of Russian-Iranian relations as Kozyrev worked in Soviet and Russian foreign ministries on Iran for a long time; he thus represents a rather conventional Russian diplomat's view of relations with Tehran.

c) Ukraine-Iran

In an article on Ukrainian relations with Middle Eastern nations (1996) Oles Smolansky discusses and conceptualises the role of the Middle East (including Iran) as a market for Ukrainian arms. He is rather dismissive of Ukrainian attempts to pursue ambitious policy in the region. Among the main economic factors, he emphasises the Ukrainian perception of Middle Eastern countries as sources of energy and capital, as partners for trade and technical cooperation, and as potential arms markets. Smolansky only very briefly refers to political, humanitarian and security factors, thus implying their inferiority relative to economic ones. Concerning Iran, he discusses the issues of arms supplies, technical cooperation (with possible military application), cooperation in the energy sector

(including supplying Iranian oil to Ukraine, building pipelines which could link Iran and Ukraine, and Ukraine's failed participation in the construction of the Bushehr NPP).

In an earlier article, Smolansky also elaborates on Ukraine's attempts at diversifying energy sources as an important factor in its foreign policy (Smolansky 1995). He reports in some detail how economic questions were discussed alongside Ukrainian arms sales in bilateral negotiations between Kyiv and Tehran in the early 1990s.

A collective study on Ukraine's relations to the Persian Gulf countries, supervised by Alexei Volovych (Volovych 2011a), presents a brief overview of defence cooperation (mostly during the 2000s). This work aims to present policy recommendations rather than study the phenomenon of Ukrainian external relations in the military sphere. In addition, it avoids discussing the problem of dual-use technologies and equipment.

d) Belarus-Iran

Belarusian relations with Iran have been analysed by myself for years, including as a contribution to the bi-monthly *Belarus Foreign Policy Index*. Two research projects on Belarus's relations with developing nations starting in 2009 resulted in an article on Belarusian-Iranian relations issued by the *Belarusian Institute of Strategic Studies* (BISS) in collaborating with the "Political Sphere" Institute for Political Studies (Bohdan 2012).

Several minor studies on Belarusian-Iranian relations were undertaken as parts of larger works on Belarusian foreign policy. However, they were often based on more-or-less realistic guesswork and lacked hard evidence to support points made; their claims regarding defence-related cooperation between Belarus and Iran were often speculative. A case in point is a study by Bartosz Bojarczyk (2009). A more balanced view can be found in one section of a book by Rafal Czachor (Czachor 2011: 208-211), which analyses bilateral relations without speculation on possible secret military deals.

To summarise, numerous works of various scholarly value have touched upon different aspects of defence-related cooperation between Iran and Russia. However, no study dealt directly with the theme studied in this thesis, nor could any substantiate a theoretical concept which could explain this cooperation and its dynamics.

1.5. Research Design and Scope

The dissertation shall contribute to the fields of international relations and security studies by investigating the defence cooperation between Iran and the Soviet Union and former Soviet republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus from 1989 to 2015. It will address the following core research question: What factors have influenced the defence cooperation

between Iran and (post-)Soviet nations aimed at building up Iranian defence potential?

This fundamental question consists of the following secondary questions:

- Which factors have driven the defence-related cooperation between Iran and (post-)Soviet nations?
- What factors have limited and halted the defence cooperation between Iran and (post-)Soviet nations?

These questions are of particular significance to Iran and answering them will aid in analysis of similar situations facing other countries which challenge the international system.

The period covered by this study is 1989-2015. These two years have been specifically chosen because of changes in defence cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations, as well as transformations in Iranian and Soviet domestic and foreign policies.

In 1989, huge defence-related contracts were concluded between Moscow and Tehran. They were immediately preceded or followed by such major developments as the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the beginning of the so called "reconstruction" and changes to the Constitution and leadership in Iran, the opening-up of the political system, and foreign policy revision in the USSR.

In 2015, Russia, the successor state of the Soviet Union, once again became a major partner of Iran partner after the Kremlin had resumed defence-related cooperation with Tehran. Notably, Russia has also joined Iran in its open military support of the Syrian government, and Iran has concluded a deal with a group of major global players on its nuclear programme.

This dissertation is thematically dedicated to studying defence-related cooperation, which involves non-WMD types of weapons, equipment, facilities and knowledge. The WMD capacities and their development is a separate issue with its own dynamic; the study of international cooperation on the development of WMD capacities thus requires other approaches and a different framework than those adopted here.

This raises a question regarding inclusion or exclusion from this study of certain technologies, materials and products whose military functions can be interpreted in different ways. The most obvious example is ballistic missiles of various ranges. These have been taken into consideration as far as it is possible to assume that these technologies, materials and products could be used for conventional warfare (which does not exclude

their potential use for WMD warfare). To illustrate: if the materials could be used for both short- and long-range ballistic missiles, then they were included in this study because it is reasonable to assume that short-range ballistic missile systems constructed using these materials or technologies would be of a conventional (non-WMD) type.

Another difficult issue arose concerning the purchase of dual-use products and services when they were officially purchased by an ostensibly civilian institution. This study takes such transfers into account for several reasons. First, it is difficult to ascertain whether an ostensibly civilian institution is in fact not involved in a defence-related activity. For instance, Iran's Energy Ministry, which bought, *inter alia*, Russian helicopters, was suspected by US officials to be covering for the Iranian missile programme (Dobbs 2002).

Secondly, such dual-use equipment is known to be leased and transferred between military and civilian organisations and entities. This was particularly true for helicopters leased, for instance, by IRGC to oil companies (Tasnim 27.11.2016). Moreover, the IRGC itself is known to have civilian companies under its control, and even if equipment were formally owned by such an IRGC-controlled company, there are reasons to assume that the IRGC could easily use such equipment, technology or other resources for military purposes. Last but not least, in case of military conflict, any dual-use items or resources held by Iranian firms and organisations could be mobilised by the Iranian government in case of war. Therefore, this study considers any dual-use products and resources transferred by the (F)SU nations to Iran as far as they can be assumed to be suitable for military aims.

1.6. Definitions

The following key terms are used in this thesis:

By defence-related cooperation, this dissertation means any international interaction which involved transfers through international borders – attempted or successful – of equipment, materials, technologies and knowledge whose purpose was primarily or very probably to increase the defence capacities of a country. These transfers can take various forms: delivery of equipment, drafts, know-how, materials, providing technical (maintenance, designing, research and development services) and training services, participation in joint activities (exercises, operations), and so forth.

Interaction includes any collaborative activities involving the issues that directly affect the defence capacities of the countries involved in these activities. Examples of such activities are exchange of messages regarding such activities; negotiations; conclusion of deals; transfers of equipment, materials, technologies and knowledge which can be used

primarily or very probably to increase the defence capacities of a country; providing services, and so forth.

Dynamics of defence-related cooperation is a combined notion which reflects the state of defence cooperation at a given moment in time and is characterised by two parameters: intensity and quality.

Intensity of defence-related cooperation is defined by the volume of cooperation on deals and deliveries which occurred in a defined span of time and are measured in financial (\$) and absolute terms (amount of goods or services involved).

Quality of defence-related cooperation is defined by qualitative features of defence-related goods, services and technologies supplied, transferred or received through defence cooperation at any given time. It reflects the strategic dimensions of this cooperation: a) share of defensive versus offensive military equipment supplied, maintained or overhauled; b) share of advanced versus ordinary equipment supplied, maintained or overhauled (or services provided or technologies transferred); c) share of ordinary versus new capacity-building services involved.

If not specified otherwise, the (F)SU nations, or former Soviet nations, here mean Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

The thesis focuses on the role of the (F)SU nations in the modernisation of Iranian defence capacities. It is important to distinguish between defence-related cooperation which leads to upgrading or significant enhancement of Iran's defence capacities and other kinds of defence-related interaction. The former may include transfer of equipment, technologies and know-how that in technological terms are more sophisticated than those already owned and deployed by Iran, as well as other transfers and services related to them. The latter involve transfer of equipment and services which do not lead to qualitative upgrading or enhancement of Iran's defence capacities. Among them are, for instance, transfers of equipment and technologies which Iran uses just to maintain its defence capacities in technological terms on the current level, maintenance and servicing the older systems already deployed by Iranian armed forces as far as their upgrading is not involved, etc.

These definitions, certainly, do not perfectly clarify all ambiguities as far as the scope and the content of the subject matter of this study are concerned. The dissertation deals with transfers of equipment, technologies and knowledge and provision of services, but the question is how to delimit the defence-related cooperation and foreign policy of respective states. This relationship is also a point of discussion in this dissertation: it is debatable how

closely related the two are, as well as how much autonomy defence-related cooperation has with regard to other foreign policy components given its specific and frequently secretive character.

1.7. Methodology

Taking the notion of defence-related cooperation specified above, the dissertation is a policy-oriented study on bilateral and multilateral policies and political relationships through which the above-mentioned countries interacted and cooperated over the last more than two decades. Policy, from its shaping to its implementation, is seen as one of the multiple terms in which this relationship can be described. Policy is deemed to be expressed in statements, projects, arrangements, norms and processes which can be identified and studied through scientific and analytic methods.

The methodology of this study is based on policy analysis which includes multi-component and dynamic analysis of projects, deals, transfers, statements, actors and processes. The focus remains on actual manifestations of policy-making: projects, deals and transfers and other relevant actions through which the countries in question have cooperated. The content of these projects and actions, as well as opinions regarding them and changes made, can be seen as a reflection of the bilateral (sometimes multilateral) cooperation and relations.

In the absence of comprehensive studies or at least comprehensive descriptive publications about the specifics of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations in 1989-2015, the first part of this research project, besides the analysis of existing scholarship, required collecting information on defence cooperation between Iran and former Soviet nations and subsequently ordering and archiving it in the form of a database and archival collection. This also meant assessing the veracity of published facts and claims. Another line of investigation included identifying possible gaps in existing openly-available information and areas of hidden cooperation, with subsequent investigation aimed at filling them.

It was initially planned to conduct expert interviews but these had to be abandoned as they proved relatively fruitless (in terms of information, insights or feedback). This was probably due to the fact that the issues explored by this thesis touched upon numerous sensitive matters of current politics or the very recent past. Rather than in-depth elite interviews, the findings of the research were regularly discussed with experts in order to obtain fresh ideas and pick up on leads. This involved both distance communication with colleagues and several trips to Iran and respective former Soviet republics during 2012-

2016.

After collecting a sufficient amount of primary information on defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations, this study entered the phase of conceptualisation and the search for a theoretical framework. Although this involved adapting and reshuffling existing conceptual schemes, the structural realism approach was chosen as the most suitable basis for a conceptual framework. This framework led to four hypotheses to be tested. The investigation itself combined two major methods: looking for a number of correlations, and contextual analysis of defence-related interactions through a series of relevant case studies.

Looking for correlations comprises a major part of the study. After summarising known facts regarding the scale, intensity and quality of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations, the volumes of cooperation in various periods of time were assessed. They are assumed to reflect the dynamics of the cooperation, albeit in simplified and imperfect form.

The assessment was aimed at determining the average annual volume of effectively conducted transfers. That is the most convenient way to define the level of defence-related cooperation because the deals usually involve a long process of negotiation, contract conclusion, implementation preparation, implementation, and possibly ensuing services. Payments are also disbursed in several stages. The conditions and time spans of payment usually remain unrevealed but the payments do refer to the entire deal. Thus, in order to measure the dynamics of cooperation, the average annual volume of effective transfers defined in summed prices of transferred products or provided services has been used in this study. If not specified otherwise, current prices are meant. Concurrently, the quality of cooperation was analysed, too, according to the criteria specified above.

The results of this assessment provided a basis for searching for correlations between changes in the cooperation dynamics and influence of other factors which could have affected the cooperation. Among them were 1) engagement of post-Soviet countries with the West; 2) the actions of third parties aimed at reducing or halting defence-related cooperation between Iran and post-Soviet states; 3) the international crisis due to Iran's nuclear programme. Besides looking for correlations and interpreting them (or their lack), the study includes contextual political analysis of major developments in defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU countries and factors which are presumed to possibly influence this cooperation.

1.8. Dissertation Structure

The dissertation is structured along these three main lines, each of which addresses one of the research sub-questions specified above. The text is organised into eight chapters, an afterword and appendices. The first chapter, the introduction, describes the issue to be investigated, the structure of the study, its methodology and sources. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study, based on neorealist approach. The concept of cooperation between states is considered in neorealist terms and an attempt has been made to further develop an appropriate concept of international cooperation. This developed concept provides the foundation for the hypothesis and sub-hypotheses, which shall be tested over the course of this study.

Chapter three provides a general overview of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. Both quantitative and qualitative parameters are considered. The average annual volumes of Iran's cooperation with each of the respective post-Soviet nations are assessed. In addition, cooperation is assessed in qualitative terms in order to use the main findings of this assessment to analyse various aspects of the cooperation mechanism in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter four deals with the structural domestic factors which generated the need for cooperation. It examines how interest in cooperation, as well as the countries' need for collaboration, changed over time.

The next four chapters investigate external factors. Chapter five deals above all with the broader context of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. It includes two components: their general bilateral relations and engagement of respective (F)SU nations with the West.

The geopolitical issues and resulting strategic cooperation are considered in Chapter six. This chapter examines the strategic concerns of the countries involved regarding one another, and analyses how they could have influenced quantitative and qualitative aspects of defence-related cooperation between Iran and the USSR/the three former Soviet republics considered here.

Chapter seven discusses the factors which lay beyond the realm of strictly bilateral relationships, turning to factors which relate to mechanisms of the international system. These include incentives, pressure, sanctions and other actions applied by third parties to influence defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations.

Finally, Chapter eight analyses how the nuclear ambitions of Iran – and the international

crisis caused by them – have effectively ended the cooperation between Iran and post-Soviet states in the defence sphere. It considers Iran's nuclear programme as a challenge to the existing international system, claiming that the sanctions Iran faced were a systemic answer to its attempt to undermine the fundamental standards and conventions of the existing international system.

The ensuing afterword not only summarises the findings of the thesis and makes more general conclusions, it also discusses them in the broader context of political science research. In addition, it points towards questions which require further investigation.

1.9. Sources

This study is based on open sources. This involved analysing the information already published by the media and specialised publications, as well as certain formally unpublished, but nevertheless open, records of government agencies and private entities. Both print and electronic media were considered here, and visual evidence has been consulted as well. All efforts have been made, however, to cross-examine this information and verify them through discussions with insiders – however limited and problematic these discussions proved to be.

This thesis also strives to analyse those publications, pieces of evidence and documents which usually remain neglected in the scholarship on relevant issues. Among them were the memoirs of officials and experts of various levels involved in defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations.

This study has aspired as far as possible to avoid relying on documents and publications biasing one particular side of this controversial topic. Hence, the research involved extensive efforts to identify and use original sources from the countries involved. As a result, the study draws from sources in the original languages of the involved parties: Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Persian, besides relying on relevant Western and regional publications.

2. Thinking about International Cooperation: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study relies on the neorealist approach. This approach is particularly suitable here as issues related to defence – both inside a country and between different countries – involve primarily governments and government agencies. These function as actors or at least crucial regulators in the security sphere. Given that neorealism emphasises the role of states as the main actors in international relations, it provides the most suitable basis for this study.

By adopting a neorealist approach, this thesis attempts to combine the conventional structural neorealism of Kenneth Waltz with ideas formulated later by John Mearsheimer and Fareed Zakaria, perhaps the most prominent representatives of offensive neorealism and neoclassical realism¹ respectively. However, for the purposes of this study, these particular designations are unhelpful, as both offensive neorealism and neoclassical realism adhere to the major tenets of neorealism proposed by Waltz and do not contradict the core of structural realism (neorealism). Hence, the borders between these two schools of thought are mostly ignored here as far as they can be understood to comprise altogether new approaches.

Defence-related cooperation between Iran and (post-)Soviet republics shall be studied here on two levels. First, as a phenomenon of international politics, located in the context of broader international relations; in other words, cooperation is influenced – directly or indirectly – by third parties, especially countries not directly involved in it. Secondly, as an outcome of the interaction of foreign policies conducted by various countries directly involved.

Defence-related interaction with foreign countries is, after all, a part of foreign policy – despite the fact that it may sometimes be compartmentalised from other segments of external relations, taken over by the particular interests of specific industry branches or entities, or even high-jacked by rogue elements. Neoclassical realism revisits Waltz's claim that separating the realms of international politics and foreign policy is necessary. This revision, however, does not contradict the fundamental views of Waltz. In his own words:

¹ The term “neoclassical realism” was reportedly coined by Gideon Rose in 1998 and actually implies that this strand leaves the neorealist paradigm, although its proponents do not deny the crucial importance of the international system – a pivotal tenet of the structural (neo)realism set by Waltz.

“The third image describes the framework of world politics, but without the first and second image there can be no knowledge of the forces that determine policy; the first and second images describe the forces in world politics, but without the third image it is impossible to assess their importance or predict their results” (Waltz 1959: 238). Thus, when neoclassical realists “favor beginning intellectually at the systemic level but then [take] care to trace precisely how, in actual cases, relative power is translated and operationalised into the behavior of state actors” (Rose 1998: 166) they follow the logic which Waltz also accepted as a correct way to analyse international relations. This shall be the approach adopted by this study as well.

This dissertation sheds light on various aspects of defence-related cooperation, which, directly or indirectly, involves challenges to the existing global political constellation by at least one participating state. To accomplish this, the thesis analyses the dynamics, driving forces and facilitating or limiting factors of this cooperation by studying relevant interactions in an appropriate context, and testing the hypotheses formulated on the basis of the chosen theoretical framework described below. Based on the assumptions derived from the theoretical framework laid out in this chapter, this thesis posits that *international political factors (especially the actions of third parties) and geopolitical considerations – rather than domestic factors – determined the defence cooperation of Iran and the (F)SU in 1989-2015.*

In other words, the defence cooperation between Iran and (post-)Soviet nations was shaped primarily by the structural peculiarities of an international system which had transformed from a bipolar to a post-bipolar system tending to unipolarity. The international cooperation of these states in the defence field was driven by a relative-gains calculation – as they perceived these possible or actual gains according to different layers of their own national security interests in a broader international context.

The significance of international political factors does not mean that internal factors should be dismissed altogether. The latter play a separate role by generating a necessity and motives to engage in international cooperation, while the general course of the cooperation and its major features are determined by the former: i.e., international political system-related factors.

2.1. The Neorealist View of International Relations

Power is the ordering principle of politics in general and international politics in particular. One of the founders of realism, Edward H. Carr, wrote: “International politics are always power politics; for it is impossible to eliminate power from them” (Carr 2001: 130).

According to him, since the *ultima ratio* of power in international relations is war, among all instruments of the statecraft the military has “supreme importance” (*Ibid*: 102).

Power struggles as a basic factor of international politics might be less obvious – although probably not less important – in regions where a higher level of mutual trust between states has been attained and international relations are to some degree channelled within regional integration initiatives, as in the European Union. But power struggles become very conspicuous in regions where this is not the case, and integration in various fields has so far largely failed. The former Soviet Union and the Middle East are two cases in point. The failures of integration in whatever form (e.g., the CSTO and CIS for the former, and the Baghdad Pact and the ECO for the latter) follow from and reproduce low levels of trust between the countries involved.

These circumstances cause the states in these regions to pursue their own national security interests more intensively and to resort to military means much more frequently. For Iran, this recalcitrant isolation is exacerbated by its minimal participation in global international organisations and treaties; at some points in the history of the Islamic regime, its international situation has been close to the Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes*. This point has also been made by Fareed Zakaria:

“The United States and some Western countries [...] have this kind of collective order conception of the world where we want other countries to join in, to create common goods, to solve common problems, whether it is nuclear proliferation, whether it's climate change. And... you have the Chinese and honestly the Indians and Brazilians as well, who are not in that kind of post-national collective security mentality that are very much modern countries on the rise thinking about things in national interest terms, not in the international interest terms” (Youtube 21.09.2010: 39.28 – 40.15).

It is the chaos of international relations that makes states prioritize their own interests and security and pay particular attention to the military. This chaos is dynamic; in addition to ordinary changes which do not tremendously change the international system, the time span under consideration saw global international structures undergo a fundamental change from a bipolar system to a unipolar or “post-bipolar” one. By the late 2000s and early 2010s, however, discussions on the emergence of a new bipolar world were becoming ever more heated following the rise of China.²

These changes in the international system correspond smoothly to changes in relations

² E.g., Dempsey 2012. Andrew Moravcsik (2008) also talks of bipolarity yet he believes that two poles are formed by the US and EU.

between Iran and (post-)Soviet nations. The late 1980s and early 1990s were shaped by residues of Cold War patterns in international politics. For instance, as Waltz underlines, “In a bipolar world, alliance leaders can design strategies primarily to advance their own interests and to cope with their main adversary and less to satisfy their own allies” (1988: 622).

According to this framework, the United States’ strategy had to concern itself with Iran only in so far as Iranian policies were aimed at cooperation with the Soviet Union (for example, by changing its position on arms purchases when Tehran turned to the Eastern bloc for weapons) or threatened to help the Soviet Union advance its interests, especially make inroads in the Middle East (e.g., when Iran had caused a dangerous situation in the Gulf the Soviet Union proposed to protect Kuwaiti tank-ships during the Iran-Iraq War). This does not negate, of course, the large-scale yet reactive measures taken by the US to repel some acts of the Iranian government directed against the US and its allies. Still, these measures were not among the strategical priorities of the United States as long as the Cold War lasted.

Iran, however, emphasised its confrontation with both superpowers, i.e., the US and the USSR, and decided to approach the Soviets only in 1989 when Soviet-US relations were at their best. This tentative rapprochement was limited however, especially compared with its adversary Iraq and other Arab nations. Protests by the US government against these deals were in vain.

The unipolar world emerging in the early 1990s brought about a new situation for Iran. It could no longer exploit American fears of Russia gaining ground in its neighbourhood and moreover had to deal with the increasingly proactive policy of the US there. Furthermore, Washington was increasingly able to act unilaterally, confirming Waltz's notion of the great power which cannot “exert a positive control everywhere in the world” but “has global interests which it can care for unaided” (Waltz 1964: 888). Although this quote refers to a bipolar world, there is no reason to doubt its veracity with regard to a post-bipolar or unipolar world order.

For a time, some geopolitical space remained outside the control of the sole global superpower which had won the Cold war, and the former Soviet Union presented the Iranian government with numerous opportunities for military modernisation. In the early 1990s especially, Washington had much more pressing issues in the post-Soviet space than Iranian procurement of conventional weapons.

This changed by the mid-1990s (the 1995 Gore-Chernomyrdin memorandum on the

complete cessation of all Russian arms transfers to Iran was a symbolic turning point). Nevertheless, by this time Tehran had managed to acquire some equipment to replenish its arsenal after its prolonged conflict with Iraq.

The sole superpower embarked on a policy of dual containment and labelled Iran a 'rogue state' and later a member of the 'Axis of Evil.' Despite predictions that the unipolar world would be more peaceful, for Iran the end of the Cold war meant the beginning of a new round of isolation and confrontation with the US, its allies and the larger international community – which increasingly took the side of the US and its allies.

These processes correspond with the mainstream predictions of neorealist scholarship. For example, the idea of “unipolar peacefulness” has been challenged by Nuno Monteiro (2011: 11), who points to the American military engagements in the years after the end of the Cold war. As he argues: “unipolarity creates significant conflict-producing mechanisms that are likely to involve the unipole itself” (Monteiro 2011: 12).

The implications of the end of the bipolar global system have also been examined by Birthe Hansen (2000). She identified the following characteristics of the global unipolar system: flocking (states assemble around the most powerful nation in the world), the single option (there is no alternative global power to align with), hard work (the remaining global power has less interest in intervening/supporting resolving issues around the globe) and the unipole's agenda (the remaining global power can compel others into accepting its agenda) (Hansen 2000: 18-19).

From 1989 to 2015, the West, and in particular the US, along with the countries aligned with it, almost uninterruptedly pursued a policy of limiting Iran's efforts at economic reconstruction and development of its own capacities in all fields, including the military. If the theoretical concepts quoted above are correct, then the post-Soviet nations should have increasingly sided with the West against Iran following the collapse of the USSR.

Therefore, the first hypothesis to be tested here is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The degree of a country's involvement with the West (as measured by its integration into respective international associations and structures in the field of politics, economics and security) correlates with the dynamics of the Iran-(F)SU defence-related cooperation. This hypothesis shall be tested by checking correlations between changes in a country's involvement with the West and changes in the dynamics of defence cooperation. It posits that if a country's involvement with the West increases, its involvement in defence cooperation decreases, and vice versa.

Initially, the West and its allies merely contained Iran as it threatened their individual interests; there was neither need nor opportunity to establish a broad international coalition to oppose Tehran. This situation changed beginning in the early 2000s. On the one hand, Tehran's technological and military projects grew more ambitious (especially in the nuclear and missile fields) and its international behaviour once again became more militant. On the other hand, as a result of the collapse of the bipolar system, a wider international consensus on the global system's rules and values emerged. At the same time, the remaining challenges to more-widely accepted international rules and values changed character.

Miroslav Nincic (2005) proposed analysing them as a kind of deviant international behaviour. The international agenda changed accordingly: it now included concerns related to supporting terrorism or WMD proliferation by such challenger nations. Nincic, however, does not include transfers of conventional arms (especially advanced systems) to such countries, despite the fact that they can be cause for concern as well, as they give challenger countries opportunities to defend not only their sovereignty and integrity but also their regimes, including against internal opponents. What's more, such transfers, for instance, can help challenger countries strengthen the insurgent activities of their allies fighting against the existing international order elsewhere, which can amount to supporting terrorist activities.

As previously mentioned, the proponents (and stakeholders) of the existing international order, especially the US, have opposed the transfer of defence-related weapons, technology, and corresponding services to Iran since the late 1980s. However, Iran's nuclear programme and some obviously related projects (e.g., development of ballistic missiles) challenged one of the fundamental principles of the existing international systems: that of non-proliferation. As a result, by the late 2000s, the US and its allies succeeded in mobilising most nations to counter Iran's challenge.

The massive response to these efforts by global powers and the international community can be considered a kind of systemic answer to a challenge undermining the system. The confrontation which emerged because of it constitutes the context in which the defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations in the 2000s and 2010s evolved. This is the basis for Hypothesis 2, which reads:

The crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear programme radically influenced the dynamics of the Iran-(F)SU defence-related cooperation. As the international crisis surrounding the Iranian nuclear programme changed the conditions of interaction with Iran, this hypothesis posits that after the beginning of the crisis, defence cooperation decreased, and

every new phase of the crisis led to a further decrease in defence cooperation.

2.2. International Cooperation

A neorealist model of international cooperation, with some modifications, shall be applied as the major analytic tool in this thesis. The relative gains of all sides shall be identified for different time spans and areas of cooperation, as will the restrictions and limits on cooperation. The interaction of these facilitating/enabling and hampering factors define the cooperation and its outcome.

Structural realism is skeptical about the prospects of international cooperation. However, its concept of *relative gains* is suitable to explain the defence cooperation between the Soviet Union/post-Soviet nations) and Iran since the late 1980s.

The initial discussion of relative gains in scholarly literature dealt with the distribution of gains between cooperation partners. It supposed that if a state sees its absolute gain as relatively bigger than the gain acquired by its cooperation partner(s), it considers the gain as shifting the balance of power in its favour and embarks on the cooperation course (Waltz 1979: 105). In other words: “Realists find that states are positional, not atomistic, in character, and therefore [...], in addition to concerns about cheating, states in cooperative arrangements also worry that their partners might gain more from cooperation than they do” (Grieco 1988: 487).

However, as Niklas Schörnig notices: “Waltz and Grieco did not take into consideration that any absolute gain also means a relative gain with regard to the states not involved in that cooperation, so the net effect of gain which comes about from cooperation is very difficult to estimate” (Schörnig 2006: 88). This means that cooperation is necessarily an interaction which also involves not only the immediate cooperation partners but the broader international environment of states which might be affected by the cooperation results and consequences. Thus, the importance of considering the whole essential constellation for every cooperation case shall be emphasised.

It is this constellation which explains a given state’s motivations for cooperation. As long as Russia and Iran considered each other capable of promoting each other’s interests, their governments supported the cooperation. In its cooperation with Russia, Iran strived to secure a major stable source of the advanced equipment and technologies necessary for confronting its foes, especially Iraq (in the 1980s) and the USA (throughout the period). For Russia, the situation was more dynamic.

In some periods, such as the 1990s, Iran was a source of funds, allowing Moscow to

support its own survival – buoying the economy in general and defence industries and the military in particular. In other periods, Moscow believed Tehran was able to challenge the US in the Middle East and weaken American positions in other regions. Moreover, the restraint displayed by Tehran in Muslim-majority regions of the former Soviet Union became a kind of trade-off for Russian cooperation.

Nevertheless, there were times when Moscow abandoned projects with Tehran when it considered its relative losses in relations with third parties – jeopardized by its relations with Tehran – to be more important than potential gains from cooperation with Iran. Alternatively, third parties had more to offer Moscow in exchange for cutting ties with Iran than Moscow had to gain by upholding contacts with Tehran.

The S-300 deal in 2010 is a case in point: Russian and American leadership successfully mitigated tensions which had prevailed in US-Russian relations throughout the 2000s. Moreover, some part of the Russian political establishment at the time tried to enlist the US and other Western countries' help – especially in terms of technological know-how – to modernise the Russian economy (New York Times 01.04.2009). The decision taken by then Russian President Medvedev to ban the sale of S-300 SAM systems and other weapons to Iran in September 2010 was a kind of trade-off by the Kremlin for better relations with Washington.

2.3. The Problem of Relative Gains and Positionality

The concept of relative gains must be refined in some regard as it contains certain inconsistencies. As Joseph Grieco argues: “According to realists, states worry that today's friend may be tomorrow's enemy in war, and fear that achievements of joint gains that advantage a friend in the present might produce a more dangerous potential foe in the future” (Grieco 1988: 487). But what if there are no reasonable grounds to imagine such a potential threat stemming from that state in the future?

Here Iran is a case in point, as the ruling establishment in Russia hardly considered it a threat. Conversely, Russia is not considered a danger by Iranian ruling elites. The opposition in both countries sometimes articulated alternative visions (e.g., voices within the Green Movement in 2010 displayed anti-Russian sentiments, and the Russian liberal opposition periodically described Iran as a threat, but in both cases these views remained marginal as far as foreign policy decision-making is concerned).

Grieco goes further to write: “Driven by an intense interest in survival, states are acutely sensitive to any erosion of their relative capabilities, which are the ultimate basis for their

security and independence in an anarchical, self-help international context” (Grieco 1988: 498). Here again the important omission is the undefined meaning of “relative”, i.e., relative to whom?

It would be plausible to assume that not all threats actually lead to a reaction. For example, given Russia’s current weakening relative to the West in general and the US in particular (which results in the necessity to counteract the global expansion of the US and Western encroachments into the former Soviet/Russian sphere of influence), the distant possibility of an Iranian threat to Russian interests seems very hypothetical. Moscow even seems to be turning a blind eye to Chinese encroachments (Cooley 2012), and Iran’s ambitions are far humbler than China’s; here the logic of Russian foreign policy seems clear.

This ambiguity persists in the scholarly literature, although a solution to it has been discussed for years. As Grieco notices: “realists find that the major goal of states in any relationship is not to attain the highest possible individual gain or payoff. Instead, the fundamental goal of states in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances in their relative capabilities” (Grieco 1988: 498). Although he alludes to one of the founders of political realism, E.H. Carr, he modifies some aspects of Carr's argumentation.

As Carr writes: “the most serious wars are fought in order to make one's own country militarily stronger or, more often, to prevent another from becoming militarily stronger” (Carr 2001: 111). Here Carr explicitly had war in mind, rather than “any relationship”, as Grieco discusses in the above-mentioned quotation.

Moreover, Robert Gilpin has emphasised that the international system “stimulates, and may compel, a state to increase its power; at the least it necessitates that the prudent state prevent relative increases in the power of competitor [*underlined by me – SB*] states” (Gilpin 1981: 87-88). This means that not all countries are equally important when it comes to comparing one's own potential with, or at least competitor states are more important in this regard. This approach is a new development for the neorealist paradigm, as “neorealism makes only one stratification of states: into great powers and other states” (Hansen 2000: 18). Logically, there should be another stratification as well, based on geopolitical criteria (this is considered in the next section).

For Iran and Russia, this means that they have to compare – albeit in different ways – their powers and capabilities with their American rivals and some other countries (e.g., Iran with Arab countries, Russia with European nations, China, Japan), and much less with each other, because of the lesser degree of competition that existed between Moscow and Tehran in the period under consideration.

An even finer solution to the problem that different states are of unequal importance for countries' national security is the idea of positionality. As Waltz suggests: "the first concern of states is not to maximise power but to maintain their position in system" (Grieco 1988: 498). Of course, this statement is also somewhat ambiguous. He fails to specify which system he means, and this system is quite probably not a single one and is not homogeneous, but rather contains its own components (regional subsystems) and is heterogeneous.

Thus, a state has to care about its position not only in the entire system, but also in one or more of its components (subsystems). For instance, after 1991, Russia tried to maintain some clout globally but also had to deal with each region that it considered of vital importance individually – among them were such large and specific regions as Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and the Far East. Likewise, Iran had to maintain its stature not only globally, but also in the Islamic world, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The assumption that the international system does have a structure has been discussed by Randall Schweller, albeit in general terms. He insists that the neorealist division between bipolar and multipolar systems has often proved to be inefficient as an analytical approach; a more careful look at the distribution of power may unveil the foreign policy effects that the system's structure can be expected to produce. According to him, relative power influences national policy, and the structure of the international system – i.e., the distribution of material power capabilities – has a critical impact on alliance formation and foreign policy (Schweller 1998).

Overall, this idea of a system containing subsystems has remained relatively undeveloped. Thus, when Grieco discusses the "system" in reference to positionality he refers to just one. According to him:

"State positionality may constrain the willingness of states to cooperate. States fear that their partners will achieve relatively greater gains; that, as a result, the partners will surge ahead of them in relative capabilities; and, finally, that their increasingly powerful partners in the present could become all the more formidable foes at some point in the future" (Grieco 1988: 499).

He proposes an equation for the "state's utility function" (U) which in his opinion reflects a realist understanding of international cooperation:

$$U=V - k(W-V)$$

This function includes both the state's individual payoff (V), and the difference between the state's individual payoff and the partner's payoff (W). Element k is the state's coefficient of sensitivity to gaps in payoff to its advantage or disadvantage (Grieco 1988: 500-501).

The last element enables us to account for the difference in cooperating with different states. As Grieco explains, “ k will increase as a state transits from relationship in what Karl Deutsch termed a ‘pluralistic security community’ to those approximating a state of war” (Grieco 1988: 501).

The major point of neorealism is that structure matters, and structure relies on relative capabilities. Hence, changes in relative capabilities play a central role in determining the prospects of cooperation. Realist scholars have already argued this point implicitly. For example, Morgenthau argues that cooperation in diplomacy always has to do with balancing of gains because states usually try to balance power, and “given such a system, no nation will agree to concede political advantages to another nation without the expectation [...] of receiving proportionate advantages in return” (Morgenthau 1973: 179).

However, Morgenthau again fails to clarify relative to what the balance is defined. A logical conclusion would be that states strive to maintain balance in bilateral relationships but not in global politics, but Morgenthau does not say this explicitly. Grieco also uses the same ambiguous categories, insisting: “according to realists, states define balance and equity as distribution of gains that roughly maintain pre-cooperation balances of capabilities [underlined by me – S.B.]” (Grieco 1988: 501).

The concept of gains attained through international cooperation with regard to third parties implies the possibility of a reverse development: actions by third parties could influence cooperation between certain nations. Indeed, third parties will react to the power gains that some foreign nations achieved with regard to them – this fits the neorealist paradigm perfectly.

Hypothesis 3: There exists a correlation between the attempts of third nations and/or the international community (represented by the UN) to limit or disrupt the Iran-(F)SU defence-related cooperation on one hand and the dynamics of this cooperation on the other. These attempts at disruption come in the form of sanctions, political pressure, possible special actions or alternative offers to (F)SU nations (concerning possible compensation if they end defence-related cooperation with Tehran).

After detailing the most notable of such attempts by third nations and/or the international community to hinder cooperation between Iran and the (F)SU, their timing and intensity

(unilateral/multilateral, scale of threatened/proposed losses/gains) will be compared to the dynamics of defence cooperation to establish possible correlations. Statements of officials involved in such deals and other evidence will be provided to strengthen each case.

2.4. Geopolitical factors

Neorealism insists on the lack of hierarchy among states, but this entails the lack of a legally consolidated hierarchical system. This does not mean that for every country all other countries in the world are equally relevant (important and valuable) in terms of national security. Both geographical location and geopolitical constellation make various nations more or less relevant for the national security of any given state.

The international system, which is the central concept of structural realism, exists not in abstract homogeneous space devoid of natural circumstances like distances but in geographical reality. Hence, the realities of this structure are contingent upon geographical peculiarities: the behaviour of any given country relative to another is modified by geographic location, not only by its place in the international system (respective hierarchy).

The notion that geographic factors can influence international relations does not contradict the fundamentals of the structural realist approach, and the latter can benefit from integrating basic geopolitical concepts. Structural realism has no choice but to deal with the concept of geopolitics according to its most basic definition – as a link between socio-political developments and relatively constant fundamental geographical factors. Certain geographical factors are almost unchangeable by human forces (the form of continents and seas, topographical relief, and so forth), while others (national borders, neighbouring nations, access to sea) can change only under extraordinary and sometimes cataclysmic circumstances.

In this study, two geopolitical concepts shall be specifically discussed: strategic concerns and strategic cooperation. In their most basic form, both are consistent with the structural realist idea that states are worried about the capacities of other states, but the concepts link this idea to geographic reality.

Some attempts have been made to accommodate these factors within the theoretical constructions of Kenneth Waltz. For example, Glenn Snyder writes about geographical features, in particular distance and topography, as “modifiers of capability” of states (Snyder 1997: 29). Here he develops the idea of Kenneth Boulding, who writes about “loss-of-strength gradient”, meaning that the factor of physical distance diminishes capabilities (Boulding 1962: *passim*). The effect of this gradient is inverse: “the farther the

distance over which [military] power is to be applied, the lower its intensity” (Marwah 1977: 32). Undoubtedly, in many cases, other geographic factors, such as mountain ranges, waterways, deserts and swamps, can also diminish or multiply capabilities. However, this study considers only distance.

The government of every country, as a rule, works to prevent potential threats and remove actual ones. Growth in the military capacities of a different country *per definitionem* can constitute such a threat. However, given the geographic gradient in strength, such growth is cause for concern to various degrees. The closer country *A* is to country *B*, in which *A* is increasing its military might, the more concern *A*'s military efforts will cause for the leaders of country *B*, with all logical implications (like *B*'s efforts to stop military growth of country *A*). An obvious conclusion is that governments care most about the military growth of neighbouring countries.

Structural realists emphasise that there is essentially no trust among states, so one nation's own capacities and the capacities of others is the basis upon which states develop policy. As neorealism developed further, scholars paid some attention to the phenomenon of growing power and how it effects corresponding changes in national security and foreign policy. Melvyn Leffler studied (1992) U.S. foreign policy in the initial stages of the Cold War, as the American state's relative power was increasing. He argued that change in its capabilities played a role in shaping policymakers' perceptions of threats, interests and opportunities. According to Leffler, policies implemented by the Truman administration, although affected by concern over Soviet threats, were nevertheless shaped by rising American power as well. Moreover, he noted that U.S. policymakers were worried not about an immediate or primarily military threat, but rather about a potential future challenge to the broader environment of the country.

Fareed Zakaria laid out these ideas more clearly, asking: “Why, as states grow increasingly wealthy, do they build large armies, entangle themselves in politics beyond their borders, and seek international influence?” (Zakaria 1998: 3). He argues that this stance follows from the aspiration of states to control their environment. William Curti Wohlforth notices that: “state behavior [is an] adaptation to external constraints conditioned by changes in relative power.” (Wohlforth 1995: 8).

Robert Gilpin explains that states are uninterruptedly “tempted to try to increase [their] control over the environment. ... A more wealthy and more powerful state ... will select a larger bundle of security and welfare goals than a less wealthy and less powerful state” (Gilpin 1981: 94-95, 22-23). For Iran, the end of the war with Iraq, political changes and a

renewal of leadership in the late 1980s gave rise to a new epoch – the Reconstruction Epoch (*Asr-e Sazandegi*), when under President Rafsanjani the country accelerated its economic development and could actually afford to pursue more ambitious security and welfare goals abroad, especially starting in the 1990s.

On the one hand, this makes defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F-)SU nations seem paradoxical: Moscow continued to arm Tehran despite the latter's ever more assertive policies on the borders of the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, the situation can still be interpreted without deviating from a structural realist approach. First, strategic or geopolitical cooperation can increase trust between allies, thus ensuring more tolerance with regard to each party's growing military power. This strategic cooperation does not contradict the tenets of structural realism, either. It fits into the structural realist approach if considered as a *quid pro quo* at the expense of third parties, even when accompanied by ideological explanations. In its most basic form, this phenomenon can be represented thus: country *A* is more willing to supply arms to neighbouring country *B*, which is its ally, than to neighbouring country *C*, which is not its ally.

Secondly, the issue of trust is more or less important to the decision-making process of a given government regarding defence-related cooperation with a foreign country depending on how close the countries are geographically. In other words, trust is critical for establishing defence-related cooperation between a country in question and foreign countries which could potentially pose a threat (e.g., because of proximity to one's borders, size, already existing military capacities etc.) to the national security interests of the country in question. It is less important when a foreign country does not or cannot pose such a threat to the country in question (because they are located far away, they are small and possess limited military capacities, etc.). In fact, it is this difference in potential risks related to the strengthening of foreign countries that makes international cooperation possible.

Countries cooperate with other countries that do not possess serious offensive potential in relation to them and cannot effectively threaten them. This cooperation enables them to acquire relative gains in competition or confrontation with third countries that possess offensive potential perceived as threatening. At the same time, this unequal relevance of different countries to each other in terms of national security also shapes the quality of the cooperation. For example, in the case of defence-related cooperation, a country considering military equipment exports will bear in mind not only the state of relations with the receiving country but also the latter's geopolitical situation, especially with regard to itself.

In this dissertation, these concepts shall be used in order to examine the specific influence of geopolitical factors over defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F-)SU nations. Given the fact that geographic realities, and hence geopolitical factors, change very rarely, their influence is expected to be more general, i.e., affecting all transfers.

These theoretical constructs shall be tested by examining the differences in geopolitical factors affecting Iran's relations (strategic concern and level of strategic cooperation) with every one of the four states under consideration here (the USSR, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus), on the one hand, and the general quality of their transfers to Iran of defence-related equipment and technologies and provision of related services on the other.

2.5. Regional Hegemony and Balancing Alliances

As already discussed, geographical factors become geopolitical after they are placed in the appropriate political context. The degree of trust and partnership – or suspicion and animosity – between respective nations is important in this regard: it modifies, diminishes or increases the effect of geographical factors (and *vice versa*, of course). This influence establishes a major conceptual link between geopolitical and neorealist approaches.

In this thesis, the geopolitical interaction between the (F)SU nations and Iran shall be analysed along two thematic lines: identifiable strategic concerns and strategic cooperation or competition between respective nations. To assess the status of strategic interaction between respective nations, two core concepts are used here: regional hegemony and balancing alliance.

Iran challenged the fundamental standards and conventions of the international system after having attained regional hegemony. Its regional hegemony affected the interests of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet nations (especially Russia) in different ways. These can be categorised as neutral (e.g., its promotion of trade with Central Asia and South Caucasus), unfavourable (e.g., Iran's efforts to provide post-Soviet republics with transit routes to world markets circumventing Russia) and favourable (e.g., Iran's opposition to growing Turkish and Saudi influence in former Soviet Central Asia).

The concept of balancing alliance is closely linked to the notion of regional hegemony. John Mearsheimer emphasises his adherence to structural realist terms as he argues for a concept of regional hegemony capable of explaining the patterns of international relations in a post-bipolar world. This argument rests on five assumptions about the international system:

1. The great powers are the main actors in international politics;

2. All states have some offensive military capability;
3. No state can be certain about the intentions of other states, especially in the future;
4. Survival is the principal goal of all states;
5. States are basically rational actors (Mearsheimer 2010: 79-80).

In his opinion, these features lead to three forms of behaviour: fear, self-help and striving for hegemony. Mearsheimer considers hegemony the best way to ensure survival, despite the fact that this hegemony cannot be truly global for objective reasons; only regional hegemony is thus feasible.

Hence, the best way to survive is:

- to be a regional hegemon;
- to prevent any “peer competitor” from emerging in respective regions of the globe.

He explains that for a state, hegemony within its neighbourhood allows it to operate freely outside this neighbourhood. Thus, the US should deal with any emerging hegemonic powers (Mearsheimer 2010: 80, 89). On the other hand, Mearsheimer discusses the possibility of balancing alliances aimed at “containing an aspiring regional hegemon” (Mearsheimer 2011: 31). By accepting this concept, he essentially acknowledges the possibility of international cooperation; in this case, the interaction is aimed at gaining relative gains in relation to a third country or countries. Although he specifically discusses potential US alliances with Asian nations in order to contain Chinese regional hegemony, there are no reasons to restrict such a possibility to specific cases.

Moreover, it is logical to assume that balancing alliances emerge not only to prevent or contain regional hegemons, but also to counteract global hegemons or attempts by a certain nation to attain or maintain global hegemony by subduing certain regions. In the period under consideration, this is true for the global domination ambitions of the US, which severely threatened the regional ambitions of Russia and Iran. This also changed – mostly in a restrictive way – the international political options for Belarus and Ukraine. Two other cases considered here are attempts by Iran and Russia – sometimes loosely coordinated, sometimes separately – to oppose Turkish and Saudi attempts to expand their influence in the former Soviet Union and Middle East.

Such strategic alliances, regardless of the degree of their formal registration and consolidation, can be assumed to drive cooperation in other fields. A given state can pay for strategic cooperation with a foreign country in some geopolitically important area by

providing the latter with goods, services and benefits in another field, including the military.

Balancing alliance is another important concept for analysing the defence cooperation between post-Soviet states and Iran. In 1989-2015, Iran was interested in any alliance that might enable it to counterbalance American influence in its neighbourhood – the Persian Gulf, Caucasus and Central Asia. The same was true for Russia, which harboured concerns about American inroads in its former spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. A similar hypothesis has already been put forth by Amir Mohammad Haji Yousefi, who attempted to analyse the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran by applying neorealist concepts (Haji Yousefi 1381). He considered several Iranian policies towards Persian Gulf countries in the 1980s and Central Asian and Transcaucasian nations in the 1990s. According to him,

“The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Central Asia and the Caucasus has been shaped by the perception of a [certain] necessity faced by Iran, i.e., a necessity to strategically cooperate with Russia, in a confrontation with America. [...] it resorted to a conventional policy of alliance and resulting partial balancing, i.e., cooperation with Russia in order to confront America. It was because of this necessity that the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Central Asia and the Caucasus – contrary to its policy in the Persian Gulf in the 1980s – was a policy based on pragmatism [‘amalgamo] and conservative course” (Haji Yousefi 1381: 1025-1026).

For Belarus, relations with Iran in particular, and indeed with Middle Eastern countries in general, are a means to balance growing Western predominance in its neighbourhood and counteract Western pressure on Belarus over its political development, as well as balance its relations with Russia. Meanwhile, for Ukraine, relations with Iran have only sporadically taken the form of a balancing alliance, mostly at times when the Ukrainian government was headed by leaders interested in maintaining some balance in its external relations between the West and other directions of Ukrainian foreign policy.

When speaking about alliances, it is important to identify any material and tangible expressions and the concrete results of these arrangements in order to avoid fruitless speculation. For the purposes of this study, in order to evaluate the reality of bilateral relations, i.e., the existence or absence of alliance between Iran and respective (F)SU nations, an analysis of strategic interaction between Iran and (F)SU nations with regard to major issues has been undertaken.

The following hypothesis will be tested with regard to geopolitical factors:

Hypothesis 4: Geopolitics – (strategic concerns, strategic interaction and competition, i.e., alliances between respective countries) has influenced the volume of defence-related cooperation and its quality (defined as the relative sophistication of the types of weapons and services former (F)SU nations were willing to supply Iran with).

This hypothesis implies that the geographical location of a given state and its geopolitical situation influence its decisions regarding what military goods and services it was willing to give or withhold from Iran. A country which directly borders Iran and has its own vital interests to protect in Iran's neighbourhood will be the most cautious in supplying Iran with strategically important weapons, expertise and services, as these could enable Tehran to radically change its strategic military position in the region. This could have consequences for the supplying country. A country located further away from Tehran with fewer vital interests in Iran's neighbourhood will be the most willing to supply Iran with sophisticated and strategically important weapons, expertise and services.

2.6. Conclusions

To sum up, this thesis sets out to study defence-related cooperation between Iran and three (F)SU nations by applying an essentially neorealist approach, refined by special attention to issues of international cooperation and combined with some geopolitical concepts. The thesis will accomplish this by testing four hypotheses. The results will indicate not only the applicability and usefulness of the neorealist approach for studying contemporary international relations, but also attest to the validity of integrating the neorealist conceptual framework with the concepts of geopolitics.

The study of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (post-) Soviet nations starts with an investigation of which internal structural factors made Iran and (F)SU nations cooperate in the first place, and whether these needs and motives to cooperate changed over time. Next, this thesis moves to examine how and why systemic-level factors influenced the defence-related cooperation between Iran and the (F)SU, considering two major sets of issues: strategic considerations of respective governments involved in this cooperation and the actions of third parties (both countries, groups of countries and international organisations) aimed at influencing the cooperation.

3. Overview of Defence Cooperation between (F)SU Nations and Iran

This chapter outlines the process of defence-related cooperation between the Soviet Union (and post-Soviet states) and Iran. It identifies the major events, developments, deals and transfers constituting this process and groups them into major stages to provide a basis for further analysis.

The chapter primarily investigates and lays out the facts. This is an absolute necessity as there is a notable lack of any more or less complete empirical overview of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. The closest available publication presenting this sort of data is the 2016 Arms Transfers Database published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

However, the SIPRI's database proved insufficient for the aims of this dissertation for several reasons. First of all, it includes only transfers of military equipment which can be clearly identified as such, and thus ignores equipment which could potentially be used for military aims. Secondly, the database does not include other types of interaction that occur as part of defence-related cooperation: refusals to supply specific equipment, failed deliveries, transfer of technologies, knowledge, and so forth. Thirdly, at the very beginning of the study, it became clear that some transfers were not included in the SIPRI database at all; this could affect the analysis to be carried out by this thesis. What's more, SIPRI provides scarce and very general information on transfers. In some cases it even emphasised that it is unclear who the seller was. The data in SIPRI's Arms Transfers Database are included in the form of tables with information on equipment transfers between Iran and respective (F)SU nations in the appendix (*see Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4*), allowing the reader to compare the facts of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations as revealed by study with the SIPRI data.

This overview takes into account all kinds of relatively significant interactions in the defence sphere, including interactions leading to a concrete material result and interactions which failed to produce the expected result, if any. This is important because the process of defence cooperation cannot be studied without keeping interactions with negative outcomes in mind. Examples of negative outcomes could include negotiations which did not lead to a deal or concluded deals or documents which were not fully implemented. That said, although this overview lists all successful and failed interactions in the defence

sphere, it is not exhaustive and does not intend to be so, as this is practically impossible due to the sensitive nature of the topic and its sheer volume.

Instead, the aim of this overview is to identify all major interactions and their results along with a decent number of minor interactions in order to describe the general situation in the field. That shall suffice for the aims of this dissertation. Defence-related cooperation involves interactions (e.g., requests for equipment, technologies or services, negotiations on purchasing, renegotiations due to contingencies, intended delays due to a decision by the supplying country, actual transfers and cancelling of deals) which are closely related to each other as components of a deal.

They will be considered here as separate interactions for the two following reasons: first, this approach allows better assessment of cooperation dynamics, and second, almost all large-scale deals which occur in defence-related cooperation cannot reasonably be limited to just one point in time as they do not involve a single act of sale and purchase or temporally limited interaction but rather a complex process of establishing and changing the terms of interaction with ensuing implementation of a deal. In other words, some deals' time frames consist of not one but many dates and time spans. Moreover, these deals tend to change throughout the process of conclusion and implementation. To confront this challenge this thesis takes interactions of any kind as the basic unit of cooperation – regardless of whether the outcome is positive or negative.

This chapter focuses on suppliers of equipment and services to Iran. Next comes an overview of every involved (F)SU country, keeping their interlinked nature in mind despite the necessity of separation. This approach makes it possible to better examine the impact of external and internal factors on defence cooperation. First, the periods of this cooperation shall be identified on the basis of their intensity. In the following chapters these periods will be compared with the intensity of different internal and external factors seen also in their temporary development.

To make comparisons between interactions of different countries with Iran possible, and to look for connections between deals, the overview is first structured along basic chronological lines, considering the following three time-spans: the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. However, each bilateral relationship between Iran and an (F)SU nation had its own dynamic. Thus, this chapter sets forth the chronology of interaction for each country separately and provides a brief synopsis of every period. This shall be a base for further analysis presented in ensuing chapters.

3.1. Relations between Iran and the Soviet Union in the Defence Sphere before 1989

The history of relations in the defence sphere between the modern Iranian state and the Soviet Union began almost immediately after both states were established in the early 1920s. After World War II, and especially after Iran started to receive huge revenues from oil export, their relations continued to develop (*an overview of them is presented in Appendix 5*). By 1979, the Iranian Imperial Army deployed considerable amounts of Soviet equipment of various types, and some of its officers were trained in the Soviet Union, although their numbers remained low.

After the 1979 revolution, Soviet-Iranian relations entered a very volatile phase in all spheres. Nevertheless, as Alexander Okorokov emphasised, “as far as cooperation between Iran and the USSR in the military sphere was concerned, it continued, although diminished to the minimum” (Okorokov 2008).

Indeed, the number of Soviet military specialists in Iran diminished to a merely symbolic level. By the middle of 1980, there were only two specialists, and between 1982 and 1987 just one senior military specialist remained (Zolotarev 2000: 212).

Tehran and Moscow avoided direct or visible interaction. Almost all defence-related interactions between the two countries in those years involved equipment sales, and there are few signs of other kinds of interactions, such as training, transfer of technologies, various technical services, etc. In this period, most official contacts and negotiations between the USSR and Iran involving defence-related matters remained secret for a long time.

Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s Tehran actively procured weapons from Eastern Bloc countries. The Soviet government was probably aware of many, if not most, of these purchases, as most of the countries involved were among the most loyal Soviet allies. Bulgaria and Eastern Germany would hardly have got involved in such business without coordinating with the Kremlin. The GDR even reportedly initiated such cooperation (Elamiyan 1392: 305, 193).

Another supplier of equipment to Iran since the early years of the Islamic republic has been North Korea, which in the 1980s worked closely with the Soviet Union. However, it is also possible that Pyongyang operated independently: Iran even tried – without success – to use Pyongyang to issue fake end-user certificates and thus conceal Iran's purchases of missiles from China in September 1985 (Hashemi Rafsanjani 1391: 267), a fierce enemy of the Soviet Union at the time. Writing about Iranian foreign policy in the 1980s, Ray Takeyh

insists that North Korea served as “the conduit” for deals between Beijing and Tehran (Takeyh 2009: 156). However, this seems less probable than Pyongyang supplying Tehran independently and without consulting the Soviet Union for the period between 1985 and ca. 1988, when the normalisation in Sino-Soviet relations started. Already in 1986, “North Korea sent enough signals to the outside world in order to illustrate that it had already departed the side of China” (Kim 2014: 71) and was getting closer to the Soviet Union.

More contentious is the question of whether Moscow knew about deliveries by other Eastern bloc countries known for not towing the Soviet line on some issues (Poland, Hungary); these very countries got involved in arms trading with Iran later, albeit for a shorter time and on a lesser scale (Elamiyan 1392: *passim*). Suspicion regarding involvement on behalf of Moscow in the Eastern blocs’ deals with Iran was articulated as early as the 1980s. Thus, Anthony Cordesman argued that though the USSR did not directly supply arms to Iran (as a consequence of Tehran suppressing the Tudeh Party and expelling some Soviet diplomats in 1983), Iran subsequently purchased light arms, ammunition and chemical-warfare gear from Czechoslovakia, and anti-aircraft guns, rocket-propelled grenades and ammunition from Poland, both of which were close Soviet allies (Los Angeles Times 22.01.1987).

It is also unclear whether Moscow knew about Soviet-origin arms re-transfers to Iran undertaken by close Soviet allies in the Middle East (Syria, Libya, Palestine Liberation Organisation), some of which played an important role in Iran's military operations in the 1980s (participating in deliveries of tactical ballistic missiles systems and a SAM system). In some cases, deliveries of weapons to Iran from the Eastern Bloc countries went through Libya or Syria (Elamiyan 1392: 193). That said, the probability that the Soviet Union at least knew and did not attempt to prevent such re-transfers is very high.

Mohsen Rafiqdoost, who was in charge of procurement for the Revolutionary Guards in the 1980s, admits that: “they [*the Bulgarians*], like the Syrians, had to ask Russia for permission to give us equipment like missiles. This process of gaining permission lasted a lot and we – more rapidly than the Bulgarians [*managed to get it*] – had taken them [*equipment or arms*] from North Korea” (*Ibid*: 305). More evidence that Moscow was aware of transfers follows from the fact that Moscow allowed emergency deliveries of Soviet-origin ammunition from Syria to Iran via Soviet territory during a crucial phase of the Iran-Iraq war in 1986-1988 (*Ibid*: 338-339).

These re-transfers – or mediated transfers – of equipment and ammunition became a major source of procurement for one specific part of the Iranian armed forces, the Islamic

Revolutionary Guards, since their formation and initial operations at the beginning of the armed conflict in Iranian Kurdistan. As a result, arms from the Eastern Bloc, i.e., Soviet-designed or even manufactured arms, became the standard weapons of the Revolutionary Guards (*Ibid*: 92, 188 and *passim*) as opposed to the Army, which was given most of Western, especially American, equipment Tehran could procure.

Tehran was able to procure the latter, *inter alia*, from another loyal Soviet ally – Vietnam. It reportedly started dealing with Tehran in the autumn of 1980, thus undermining Washington's efforts to put pressure on Tehran by denying Iranians spare parts (Hiro 1989: 71-72). By January 1987 Hanoi had supplied Tehran with spare parts and ammunition for a sum potentially exceeding \$600m. This mostly consisted of US-made equipment that Vietnam had seized in the previous war with the USA (Los Angeles Times 22.01.1987).

Reports on more direct Iranian cooperation with the USSR remain unconfirmed. For example, some sources claimed that the Soviets trained the Revolutionary Guards in 1981 in order to counterbalance the army, in which many supporters of the Shah remained. It has also been reported that a large IRGC training camp was established at Mashad with the help of Soviet advisers with a capacity to train up to 3,000 IRGC recruits (Yodfat 1984: 98). Though unconfirmed, these reports cannot be dismissed altogether, as many initially unproven reports on arms supplies from the Eastern Bloc have been confirmed in recent years from Iranian government insider sources.

Another way in which Tehran acquired considerable numbers of Soviet-designed or -produced weapons was collecting arms from Iraqis on the battlefield. On 10 Shahrivar 1365 [1 September 1986] the Minister for Revolutionary Guards, Rafiqdoost, announced to the media that: “The land forces of Sepah, without buying even one tank, have several armoured and mechanised divisions, and they have equipped 70 per cent of their artillery units with booty taken from Iraq” (Elamiyan 1392: 351). Most of these weapons were of Soviet design if not production. This resultantly increased Iran's need to procure ammunition and spare parts and master maintenance of Soviet-standard equipment. For instance, after the Tarigh al-Qods operation in November-December 1981, Iranians seized Iraqi weapons “from the Eastern Bloc” and as a result had to look for ways to acquire ammunition for artillery pieces (e.g., 122mm gun), MLRS (“Katyusha”) and T-62 tanks (because until then Iran deployed only T-55). The required ammunition was procured from Bulgaria and the GDR (*Ibid*: 200-201).

In the mid-1980s, direct Soviet-Iranian relations in the defence sphere entered a more dynamic stage. Most probably this came about at Tehran's initiative. However, real results

were achieved only much later; this may be explained by the contradictory and inconsistent policies of the Iranian government. For instance, in 1984 or 1985, Mohsen Rafiqdoost, the Minister of the Revolutionary Guard, following an instruction from Imam Khomeini, met with the Soviet ambassador to threaten Moscow that if it did not renounce its support for the Iraqi leader, Iran would stir up conflict among Soviet Muslims. The Soviet government allegedly responded by expressing its willingness to review its position and invited Rafiqdoost to Moscow (*Ibid*: 301). He accepted, but ultimately never came. Meanwhile, *“In Farvardin 1364 [ca. April 1985], negotiations about getting supplies from the USSR took place. [...] [Prior to that] I had cited the Soviet ambassador and told him that we decided to buy weapons and ammunition from them. I wrote a letter to my counterpart in the Soviet Union. He took my letter and after a while responded that we are ready to negotiate.”* (*Ibid*: 299) Nevertheless, in his public statements Rafiqdoost insists to this day that the USSR never sold Iran anything during the course of the war with Iraq.

According to a Soviet source, the Soviet Union started negotiations with Iran about transfer of licenses for the T-72M1 and T-72M1K at the end of 1985. The talks dragged on and ultimately Tehran did not receive technological documentation for them. Much later, in the 1990s, Iran got a license for a more advanced model: the T-72S with dynamic armour cover and set of guided weapons systems (Ustyantsev and Kolmakov 2004: 106).

The first set of Soviet arms were delivered through secret channels. In March 1986, a West German arms dealer began negotiating on terms and prices of Soviet arms delivery to Iran. As a result, a contract on the delivery of 400 Strela-2 SAM and 100 launchers was signed on 1 August. In December 1986, the Soviet Union secretly delivered the arms to Iran for about \$18m with end-user certificates issued by North Korea (Tagliabue 1987). Thus, by the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Tehran already possessed a large and constantly increasing arsenal of Soviet arms and related military equipment. In this context, subsequent developments seem considerably less radical.

A political turning point came in February 1987 when Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, accompanied, *inter alia*, by the Chairman of the Majles' Commission on Foreign Affairs Sadegh Khalkhali paid a visit to Moscow. Military officials also seem to have been involved in negotiations. In 1987, the Soviet Union started selling arms directly. A case in point are the first deliveries of T-72 to Iran, which also occurred in 1987. The precise amount is not known, but in that year Uralvagonzavod firm delivered 173 tanks and 77 tank kits (loose) to unspecified customers. Only two major country clients of Uralvagonzavod in 1987 are known : Finland and Iran (Ustyantsev and Kolmakov 2013:

Prilozhenie). The number of tanks Iran received at this point is unknown.

At the same time, the number of Soviet military specialists in Iran rose. In 1987, a group of as many as 13 officers and non-commissioned officers were working in Iran (Zolotarev 2000: 212).

Tehran kept sending further requests. Thus, in 1987, the Iranian government sought opportunities to buy the 2S4 Tyulpan, a self-propelled mortar, and the 2S1 Gvozdika, a 122-mm self-propelled howitzer from the Soviet Union (Uturgauri 2010: 206). Thus, premises for future cooperation with the USSR had already been established by the late in 1980s. Contacts and sounding out opportunities for purchases led to general decisions which would ensure future developments: as purchase of significant volumes of military equipment inevitably led to further related purchases of spare parts, material and services.

The shift towards Soviet equipment can also be illustrated by Iran's purchase of fighter jets. Although Iran started negotiations with China on Chengdu F-7s in 1987, in 1988 Iran's Air Force decided to establish three additional fighter squadrons and opted instead for the Soviet-made MiG-29 fighter and the Su-24MK fighter-bomber (Taghvaei 2012: 72). This is indicative of the increasing role of the USSR as a source of equipment.

To summarise, by 1989, Iran had accumulated an extensive and varied history of interaction with the Soviet Union in the defence sphere. This included major supplies of several arms platforms and numerous equipment types, along with training and support for the Iranian Imperial military in establishing maintenance facilities. Defence-related cooperation shrank after the 1979 Revolution but continued nonetheless. For many reasons – including ideological ones, both the USSR and Iran preferred more covert and indirect forms of interaction in 1979-1989. A number of third countries supplied Iran with arms during this time with at least the knowledge – and most probably the direct involvement – of the Soviet Union.

Before 1979, the arms with which the USSR provided Iran had mostly been state-of-the-art systems deployed by the Soviet army and its allies. The biggest restraint was the limited ability of the Iranian army to absorb sophisticated equipment, as well as some concerns harboured by Moscow regarding technological secrecy. The same can largely be said for the period of 1979-1989, albeit to a lesser degree.

This situation may have been caused by the fact that Iran had multiple choices when looking for defence cooperation partners. Moreover, these alternative partners competed with the USSR for ideological, geopolitical, economic and political reasons. Before 1979,

Iran had access to all the defence technology on offer from the Western world, as well as from China. After the 1979 revolution Tehran's choices were more limited, but during the Cold War, when Soviet leadership was inclined to oppose Western Bloc, Tehran was able to take advantage of East-West antagonism. After 1979, Tehran could openly cooperate with another country the USSR tried to counter and contain: the People's Republic of China.

3.2. Relations between Iran and the Soviet Union in the Defence Sphere in 1989-1991

3.2.1. Transfer of Hardware and Materials

Air Force and Air Defence. The first in a series of major Soviet-Iranian agreements was a deal concluded on 5 November 1989 with two components: aviation and air defence equipment. The USSR was prepared to sell Iran 20 MiG-29 jet fighters (in configuration 9-12B), four MiG-29UB training and combat fighter jets, 12 Su-24MK bombers and two long-range S-200VE Vega-E SAM systems. The total value of these sales came to \$1.3bn. Moscow also agreed to provide spare parts for this equipment for ten years after the initial sale (Kozyulin 2001).

Some of these numbers are confirmed by other sources, but specific details of the deal are more controversial. Thus, according to a source with probable access to the Iranian army, the agreement was on the sale of 14 MiG-29A (9.12A) and six MiG-29UB (9.51B) aircraft for the Iranian Air Force. The agreement also contained provisions for training 40 pilots, mostly former pilots of US-made planes, and more than 200 ground crew, plus support. The agreement also stipulated supplying 150 R-27R, 400 R-60MK, 300 R-73E missiles and their launchers, as well as 40 external centreline fuel tanks, B-8M rocket pods and FAB-series free-fall bombs (Taghvaei 2012: 71).

The agreement was largely implemented by 1994. The course of delivery of aviation equipment is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Aircraft and Ammunition Transfers between the USSR and Iran in 1990-1991.

Year	Supplied Aircraft	Supplied Ammunition
1990	14 MiG-29	350 Vympel R-27R medium-to-long-range air-to-air missile; 576
1991	12 Su-24; 20 MiG-29/MiG-29UB	lightweight air-to-air missile R-60MK

Note. Adapted from Taghvaei (2012)

When Tehran failed to acquire all the ex-East German MiG-21s it had purchased in order to establish the first fighter squadron of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Air Force (IRGCAF), it purchased a further 11 MiG-29As for the Revolutionary Guards from the Soviet Union. All the MiG-29s for IRIAF were delivered in October-December 1990. Moscow started to deliver the 11 MiG-29As for the IRGCAF in late 1991, but only four were received before the transfer of the remaining seven was halted because of the dissolution of the USSR. As a result, Tehran had to review its plans and reassign these four planes to the IRIAF (Taghvaei 2012: 71-72).

The delivery of the two divisions of S-200VE Vega-E³ SAM long-range systems started in 1990 (Almaz 1993: 15-16). As part of the deal on S-200, at least two 5N84 Oborona-14 radars 5N84 Oborona-14, a standard radar for the S-200, were been delivered to Iran in the early 1990s. In 1990 and 1991, the Soviet Union delivered one radar each year. It should be noted that these were possibly the only sales of this system by Soviet Union in those years – as documents of the NPO Almaz indicate (Almaz 1993: 13). The final delivery of equipment under this contract took place in 1994 (Barabanov 2005).

Ground forces. The agreement of 13 November 1991 dealt with transfer of licences and provision of technical assistance for production in Iran of one thousand T-72S tanks and 1.5 thousand BMP-2, as well as ammunition for them. The total value came to \$2.2bn. Moscow was scheduled to supply Iran until 2011 with respective consumable and spare parts and other equipment for which the license was not sold (Kozyulin 2001).

Navy. According to the agreement of 17 May 1990, the USSR agreed to construct six 877EKM project diesel electrical submarines for Iran and supply necessary armaments for them. Relatedly, an agreement of 24 April 1991 addressed technical assistance for construction and complete equipment of six facilities of coastal basing for 877EKM project submarines in Bandar Abbas. The total value of both contracts came to \$1.6bn.

3.2.2. Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge

Training. Alongside the transfer of military-use equipment, the Soviet Union started to provide Iran with defence-related services, above all training. In the late 1980s, and almost certainly since 1989, Iran once again began sending its officers to Soviet military academies. In 1989-1994, about 130 Iranians graduated from various (post-)Soviet military educational establishments. As a result, by 1 January 1995, the number of Iranian military personnel educated at Soviet and post-Soviet military academies since the 1960s had

³ Some sources, (e.g., Barabanov 2005) are talking about two *systems* of S-200, which seems illogical given both the technical specification, technical features and sum of the contract.

reached 632 individual. Out of them, 167 graduated from the military academies of ground forces, 100 people from air defence academies, 173 from air force academies and 192 from navy academies (Zolotarev 2000: 417).

The numbers above enumerate Iranian military personnel who underwent full-term training, which then lasted several years. The number of Iranian military officers and specialists who underwent some brief training courses or were just instructed in the Soviet Union to operate Soviet-made equipment after the beginning of large-scale defence cooperation between Moscow and Tehran was certainly much higher, probably several hundred people. Thus, in order to arm the IRGCAF with modern fighter jets (MiG-29) – a project which ultimately failed – Tehran sent 12 pilots and an unspecified number of technicians to undergo training in the USSR, although only three of the pilots assigned to the IRGCAF project completed the training in the end (Taghvaei 2012: 71-72).

During this period, the Soviet Union also sent military experts to teach Iranians how to use Soviet equipment. Thus, in 1989-1990, 141 Soviet military specialists came to advise the Iranian armed forces (Zolotarev 2000: 417). This figure grew, especially in connection with ongoing deliveries of Soviet equipment to Iran. Thus, according to some sources, more than 400 Soviet advisors and instructors were working in Iran to help its air force with Soviet hardware in 1989-1992 (Taghvaei 2012: 72).

3.2.3. Results

The implementation of the deals made between Tehran and Moscow in 1989-1991 started immediately. According to various assessments, the volume of equipment transferred and services rendered reached \$733m to \$890m as early as 1990 (Kozyulin 2001). Out of the five major deals concluded in 1989-1991 the Soviet government managed to fulfil most of its obligations for the first two deals on aircraft and air defence equipment and training, including transfer of equipment, technology and training. This brings the volume of Iranian-Soviet cooperation – in terms of effectively transferred equipment, technologies and training – to about \$1.1bn between 1989-1991.

Moscow also agreed to provide Tehran with top-rate equipment and technologies, including loosely-defined defensive weapons. As the Iranian government boasted: “We could get the newest Russian technology [*products*] like Su-24, MiG-29, etc. and for the first time we bought submarines for our country” (Tarikh-e irani 14.09.1391).

At the same time, these deliveries should not be overstated, as their scale was certainly not unprecedented for Soviet arms defence exports in the Middle East. For instance, Moscow

had earlier supplied an S-200 SAM system to Syria (in 1983 as the first export of the S-200) and Libya (in 1984). Prior to the export of Project 877EKM submarines to Iran, the USSR had already sold a number of them abroad, in particular to India and Algeria in the 1980s. The Kremlin demonstrated a general willingness to raise the level of cooperation – as contacts at the highest level confirm. The constantly increasing calibre of deals between Tehran and Moscow – every deal was bigger than the previous ones – is another indicator of the Soviet government's willingness to cooperate.

3.3. Relations between Iran and the Russian Federation in the Defence Sphere between 1992-2000

3.3.1. Hardware and Materials

Air force. Many Soviet-era deals were re-evaluated by the new Russian government. In the course of revisiting mutual defence cooperation agreements, neither Tehran nor Moscow pursued a cogent political line, and decision-makers pursued an *ad hoc* policy in their decisions to increase, decrease or even cease cooperation. It is possible that a November 1989 agreement on military planes was revised or complemented by some additional agreement already under the Soviets or slightly later, although its provision on supply of spare parts and consumables during the ten years after the final delivery were probably adhered to.

Very soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia negotiated new deals with Iran, above all concerning various aircraft. In July 1992, Iran allegedly negotiated the sale of about 110 combat aircraft with Russia, including twelve Tu-22M, 48 MiG-29, 24 MiG-31, 24 MiG-27, two AWACS aircraft Il-76. Initial information appeared first in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, but was repudiated by the Russian firm *Oboroneksport* (Litovkin 1992). Nevertheless, the Russian media repeatedly discussed this failed deal and sometimes even stated that the agreement had been signed (Latypov 2012). Although Iran clearly did not receive all of these planes, a deal concerning more MiG-29s could have been concluded. Circumstantial evidence for this includes the fact that Iran did indeed receive six MiG-29 in 1993-1994.

Nonetheless, after Tehran received its initial 20 MiG-29s for the IRIAF, it signed a contract in the winter of 1992 on the sale of a further 40 MiG-29As and eight MiG-29UB to be delivered in 1993-1994. However, Russia, concerned with the possible repercussions of this deal on its relations with the US, rescinded the deal, along with several others (Taghvaei 2012: 72). According to the contract, between 1993–1994 Iran received six MiG-29/MiG-29UB and 94 R-27R from Russia in 1994 (Kozyulin 2001).

Tehran began to take interest in helicopters relatively late compared with other equipment, as it still possessed numerous US-made helicopters. In 1994, the Kazan Helicopter Works delivered 12 helicopters Mi-17 (version Mi-8, transport) to Iran (TASS 2015).

In 1997, Iran discussed the acquisition of the Kamov Ka-52 attack helicopter, and the Kamov Ka-60 multi-purpose military transportation helicopter, both under development at the moment (Flight International 1997). However, these talks were ultimately fruitless.

According to contract signed in 1998, in 1999-2000 Russia supplied Iran with five Mi-171 helicopters, allegedly of the “civilian sort” [*grazhdanskaya komplektatsiya*] (TASS 2015).

Air defence. The delivery of air defence equipment under the November 1989 Soviet-Iranian agreement (S-200 SAM system) lasted until 1994. The deal also provided for the supply of spare parts for the equipment for ten years following the last delivery of the equipment itself (Barabanov 2005). The latter obligation was most probably fulfilled, and throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, Iranians apparently received the supplies from Russia. Proof of this is the availability and functionality of these arms systems in the Iranian armed forces.

In the late 1990s, Iran tried to further upgrade its air defence capacities. The Iranian military showed interest in buying S-300 (eight batteries [*divizion*]) as early as 1998 (Gusev 2007: 46).

Missiles. Iran also worked on obtaining materials for military purposes. The most important examples involve basalt prepreg and stainless steel. In March 1997, the *NII Grafite*, a research institution connected with Russia's Ministry of Economics, concluded a contract on supplying 4,100 kg of basalt prepreg with the Institute of Oil Industry of the National Oil Company of Iran (Korotchenko 1999). US authorities believed the material could be used, in particular, to coat ballistic missile warheads (Gordon and Schmitt 1999). Russian experts insisted that Russia's control lists did not include the prepreg and due to its actual technical features, it could not be used in missiles (Korotchenko 1999).

In October 1997, Austrian customs detained a shipment of basalt pre-preg sent by *NII Grafite* to Iran in Vienna. After conducting an examination, the Austrian authorities concluded that the prepreg was not included in the international export control lists, and Vienna lifted its objections to ship the prepreg to Iran, officially announcing this in a note sent to the Russian Foreign Ministry. However, the *NII Grafite* – allegedly upon its own initiative – cancelled three other contracts concluded earlier with Iran, and no shipments have been completed to fulfil these other contracts (*Ibid*).

Ground forces. Another large project in Russian-Iranian defence cooperation involved armoured vehicles. As mentioned above, Iran began to express its interest in purchasing Soviet tanks starting in 1985. According to Ustyantsev and Kolmakov, the Iranian government decided to buy a licence to produce the T-72 as Iranians had seen for themselves the fighting superiority of the T-72 over the M60 during the war with Iraq, as well as its almost equal fighting capacities compared with the Chieftain tanks which the Iranian army inherited from the Shah's times (Ustyantsev and Kolmakov 2004: 110).

However, the collapse of the USSR caused delays in establishing licensed mass production of the T-72 tanks (its first variants). In this context, by the mid-1990s Tehran needed to modernise the tanks of its armed forces: both the T-55/59 and older T-72 types (Veretennikov 2012: 120). Thus, at the same time as it attempted to establish assembly production inside the country, Iran resorted to other tactics. First of all, it attempted to buy complete tanks wherever it could: both new and second-hand. Thus, it bought even older, although slightly modernised, T-55 from Poland, most probably at some point between 1987 and 1992 through international arms trader Nahum Manbar (Bergman 2008: 304).

The deliveries of complete T-72 from Russia in the 1990s allowed Russian defence industries to raise badly needed funds. According to insiders, “contrary to Soviet times when T-72 tanks were a “gift” for friendly countries, in the 1990s the customers paid for them in full” (Ustyantsev and Kolmakov 2004: 85).

There are different reports concerning the modification and amount of tanks supplied by Russia. In the summer of 1993, Uralvagonzavod began to deliver T-72C tanks to Iran (Ivanova 1993). Some sources claim that the number of supplied vehicles was high: “Since 1993 Uralvagonzavod alone delivered an unknown amount – numbering in the hundreds – of T-72C to Iran” (Ustyantsev and Kolmakov 2004: 85). Other sources relate much lower numbers, namely that in 1993-1996, Russia delivered a total of 122 T-72M1 Iran. 100 of them were been delivered in 1993, 20 in 1994, and 2 in 1996 (Dmitriev 2007).

While the Russian defence industries were eager to sell, the Iranian government was looking to buy more. There is abundant evidence of this. One example relates to armoured vehicles:

“The contract [...] [some undisclosed tank contract] had not been fulfilled in full due to the so called “Gore-Chernomyrdin” agreement in which Russia renounced military cooperation with Iran. It is difficult to calculate the precise losses inflicted on Tagil's tank-builders, yet it is clear that the figure is close to a billion US dollars.” (Ustyantsev and Kolmakov 2004: 137)

According to some information, because of the Gore-Chernomyrdin agreement, Russia failed to deliver on a contract for 578 tanks (Safonov 2001).

It was probably Russia's unreliability that prompted Tehran to occasionally buy tanks elsewhere. It acquired 34 tanks from Poland in 1994 and 70 more in 1995. These were modifications of the T-72 model. However, facing a difficult situation, Tehran turned to even more marginal sources. Thus, at some point in 1991-1995, Tehran bought a couple of formerly Iraqi (i.e., almost certainly Soviet-made) tanks of this type from the Patriotic Union of [Iraqi] Kurdistan (Baer 2002: 301).

The difficulties continued in the late 1990s and Iran again looked for other sources. According to some reports, in August 1997 Ukraine and Iran signed a contract on delivery of 50 T-72 tanks of various modifications and 60 BMP-2K (command type) to Iran. There is no information on how or even whether this contract was implemented (Trofimov 2003b). In 2000-2002, Belarus sold Iran 37 T-72M1 tanks (UN 2011).

According to Ustyantsev and Kolmakov, by 2004 the Iranian armed forces had 480 T-72 tanks (export variant of T-72M1 designated as T-72S) (Ustyantsev and Kolmakov 2004: 182). Most of them were delivered in the 1990s. At the same time, Iran was buying infantry fighting vehicles: in 1993-2005, Russia delivered about 500 BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles to Iran; furthermore, around 120 BMP-2 were delivered in 1993-1997. In 1993, Russia also delivered 800 9M111 anti-tank guided missiles for the wire-guided anti-tank missile system 9K111 Fagot, which was installed at the time as a standard on the BMP-2 (Dmitriev 2007).

Alongside huge deals on aircraft, submarines and armoured vehicles, Tehran purchased a number of other arms. In 1994, it purchased one hundred 9K38 Iгла, a portable infrared homing surface-to-air missile system. Moscow never revealed this transaction, possibly being concerned about the likelihood of international repercussions, and even the TASS news agency reported the event referring to another source (TASS 2015).

Navy. An agreement on submarines which Iran had signed with the Soviet government was implemented by post-Soviet Russia. This was probably the smoothest deal of all defence-related contracts between Iran and Russia. Soviet defence industries began building Tareq 901 submarine in Leningrad on 5 April 1991. In December 1991 it was already in service – temporarily located in the Soviet/Russian Baltic Fleet. By November 1992, it had arrived in Bandar Abbas and by 22 November 1992 it had been transferred to Iranian Navy (Nikolaev 2012a).

The building of the Noah 902 submarine started in Saint Petersburg on 30 April 1992; on 31 December 1992 it entered service – temporarily located in the Russian Baltic Fleet, and by 6 June 1993 it had been transferred to the Iranian Navy. In late July 1993 it arrived in Bandar Abbas (Nikolaev 2012b).

The building of the Yunes 903 submarine started in Saint Petersburg on 5 February 1992, it was put to water 12 July 1994, and entered service – temporarily in the Russian Baltic Fleet, on 2 September 1996. By 25 November 1996, the submarine had been transferred to the Iranian Navy and on 19 January 1997 it arrived in Bandar Abbas (Nikolaev 2014).

One of these submarines (probably the Tareq – given the short interval between the conclusion of the contract and its implementation) was perhaps initially intended for the Soviet Navy and only later exported to Iran (Association of American Scientists 2000). The price of each submarine was assessed at \$250-300m (Rozin 2012). However, in 1993 Iranian Defence Minister Akbar Torkan commented that Tehran paid a considerably lower price than the \$250m per submarine reported by Western media (*Financial Times* 1993).

In March 2001, the media reported on Iran's interest in buying additional diesel submarines from Russia (Chernov 2001). As an industry insider later reported: “Iran, after the purchase of the first three subs, asked to sell it eight more. The decision about the refusal had been taken in the Kremlin” (Airbase.ru 2009).

According to other sources, in the early to mid-1990s Russian shipyards intended to build three more submarines for Iran – in addition to those supplied to Iran – but the Memorandum Gore-Chernomyrdin prevented them (Tsentr AST 2015). This can be corroborated by the fact that the April 1991 agreement stipulated the construction of six infrastructure facilities for submarines. Although this figure does not necessarily correspond to the number of submarines planned for purchase, it can be taken as an indirect indication that such plans could have existed.

Russia seems to have provided Iran only with information about the operation of the submarines rather than fundamental engineering information or designs. In 2012, Iranian Admiral Sayari complained:

“When you buy a car from a factory, you are given a small book which informs you about the functional modes of mechanisms [tarz-e kar-e dastgah-ha]. Concerning our vessels [Kilo class submarines] it was exactly the same. We had [information on] the functional modes of mechanisms, but we had nothing as far as design [tarrahi] was concerned.” (Iran Military Videos 2012: 2.42-2.57)

The agreement on constructing submarine bases was most likely reneged upon. By spring 1998, Russia had completed delivery of equipment and project documentation for construction of submarine bases (Trofimov 2003b). The implementation of the project was halted in 2000 under US pressure (TASS 2015).

After deploying Kilo-class submarines, Tehran sounded out opportunities for buying more advanced vessels. Russia apparently considered selling Tehran more powerful naval equipment. In 1997, construction of a 677E type submarine for an unknown foreign customer began in Saint Petersburg's *Admiralteiskie Sudoverfi*. The project was never completed and the hull of the unfinished submarine was spotted there in 2015 (Eagle Rost 2015).

Slightly later, in 2003, experts commenting on the prospect of military technical cooperation between Iran and Russia wrote that Iran had possibly bought “one or two of the new generation submarines of the 677 Project” (Trofimov 2003a). Considering these facts and subsequent indications of a possible Iranian interest in these submarines (discussed later in a section on Iranian- Russian defence cooperation in the 2000s) as well as their context, we can assume that Russia considered the sale of most probably one single Project 677 submarine to Iran, although how far the two countries proceeded in negotiations remains unclear.

Border control. At a conference between Russian and Iranian officials in November 1999 in Tehran, the two countries discussed the possible purchase by Iran of Russian-made electronic surveillance equipment for border control. The issue was raised again during Iran's National Security Council secretary Hassan Rohani's visit to Russia in January 2000 (Iran Report 02.10.2001). Further fruitless negotiations followed well into the 2000s.

3.3.2. Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge

Design and development. Many of Iran's attempts to engage in development and production of more advanced defence products by learning from specialists, expertise and designs of the (former) Soviet Union seem to have proven futile. Soviet/post-Soviet experts in the early 1990s began to develop an aircraft known at different times as Shafagh/Borhan. The *IHS Janes Defence Weekly* described the aircraft as a “fighter/light combat aircraft” but considered it of “the same class as the Russian Yakovlev Yak-130” (Johnson 2014), which is a trainer and a light attack aircraft.

The specifics of Soviet/Russian involvement in the programme are unclear. At any rate, the distinctive design of this aircraft was designed by Soviet designer Fatidin Moukhamedov

and his colleagues in the late 1980s, first based at the Dushanbe branch of the A.I. Mikoyan Design Bureau [*MMZ im. A.I. Mikoyana*] and then at the DB Mukhamedov Innovational Aviation Company. Moukhamedov's aircraft was known at different times, *inter alia*, as “Integral” and “Vityaz-2000” (OKB Mukhamedova 2014). The Moukhamedov Experimental Design Bureau exhibited it for the first time in 1993 at the Dubai Air Show. The project seems to have stalled by the late 1990s. Since 2001 and until the end of the period under consideration, the Shafaq programme remained in “an endless process of design concept development” (Johnson 2014).

In 1995, the Moscow Aviation Institute (MAI) launched two projects concerning the development of aircraft engines for Iran. These engines were suitable for military purposes, and in particular for short-range cruise missiles. However, by 1996, when Russia ascended the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Russian government recommended that MAI cancel both projects and the institute obliged. Full-scale work on them reportedly had not begun, although as *Kommersant* emphasised, “having received the original data and established personal contacts with Russian scientists, the Iranians can complete the projects independently” (Dmitriev 1999).

Licensed production. Tehran succeeded in acquiring technologies, and even some licenses, to launch domestic manufacture of some equipment of lower-level technological sophistication. A facility to produce – and most probably assemble – T-72S tanks was constructed in the second half of the 1990s. It is known that specialists from the Uralvagonzavod, Ural Design Bureau of Transportation Machine-Building (UKBTM), and the Ural Scientific-Technical Complex helped to establish a factory in Dorud in Iran (at least in 1997) (Ustyantsev and Kolmakov 2004: 117). In July 1998 the Iranian armed forces began to receive tanks assembled in Iran (Trofimov 2003b).

Likewise, Iran purchased some licenses for the equipment installed on platforms Tehran had bought licences to manufacture. Thus, by the mid-1990s Tehran had purchased a license to produce 9M113 wire-guided anti-tank missiles (Oruzhie Rossii 2014). These are launched from the 9K111-1 Konkurs launcher installed on the BMP-1 and BMP-2, and Iran probably bought licenses for the Konkurs systems or some of its parts along with the licenses for BMP-2 to be produced – or more probably assembled – in Iran.

In January 2004 it was revealed Iran had indeed been manufacturing an ATGM system called Towsan-1/M113 for some time. This was a local version of the Russian 9K113 Konkurs developed by the Tula KBP Instrument Design Bureau (Meyer 2012).

Russia, however, appears to have continued supplying Iran with 9M113M missiles of the Konkurs-M system as late as the 2000s. Even officially, in 2010 the Iranian order for these missiles made up at least a half of the total volume of production of the JSC Tulskey Oruzheiny Zavod (Tulskii Oruzheinyi 2010), a major defence industry factory. This means that Iran purchased or was allowed to purchase only a partial license for the Konkurs-M.

In the second half of 1990s, Iran attempted to produce – or at least assemble – some aircraft parts. On 16 May 1997, the Moscow Aircraft Production Association (MAPO) and Iran's State Industrial Aerodesign Company signed an agreement in Tehran on the manufacture of 60 TV7-117 aircraft engines by the Iranian firm under a license from the MAPO. The deal was purportedly worth \$145m. According to MAPO, the engines manufactured by Iran would be installed on An-140 (Associated Press 1997). As of September 2014, the TV7-117 were purportedly being assembled in Iran (Karnozov 2014).

The Russian Klimov Experimental Design Bureau (OKB im. Klimova) in August 1997 conducted talks in Moscow with Iranian delegates on licence-manufacturing of the RD-33 engine in Iran (Flight International 1997). The MiG-29 is powered by two of these engines and developing the capability even to overhaul and manufacture these engines from imported Russian parts would provide Iran with more flexibility maintaining its air force.

Technology Transfer. In the 1990s, at least until 1998, Iran received some missile technology from Russia. The extent and details of these transfers remain among the most opaque of all Iranian-Russian defence-related cooperation, despite numerous reports in the post-Soviet and international media (e.g., Vedomosti 09.10.2000). These interactions also attracted the attention of the US (Vlasov 1998). They most probably did not involve ready-made products and designs but rather minor technologies and expertise, as well as training courses. The transfers almost certainly occurred outside the direct control and explicit authorisation of the Russian government.

The extent of Iranian-Russian cooperation on missiles in the 1990s seems greatly exaggerated by contemporary media and analysts. Later, most experts maintained that Iranian designs of the Shahab-2 and Shahab-3 – the main types of Iranian ballistic missiles in the 2000s and 2010s – were clearly based on North Korean models (Jane's Missiles and Rockets 26.11.2001) or North Korean and/or Libyan technologies (BBC 20.05.2009). Minor components attributed by some experts to Russian technological assistance are better explained by informal assistance of rogue experts rather than full-fledged government-authorised cooperation.

Training. In these years, Iranian military personnel underwent training with Soviet- and

Russian-made equipment, sometimes on Russian territory. According to a source, albeit likely an exaggeration, in 1992 500 Iranian pilots were trained in Russia (Seay 1992: 11). Nevertheless, given the scale of both actual and planned purchases, a considerable number of Iranians had to undergo such trainings on use of Soviet- and Russian-made military equipment in Russia.

Russian universities became important actors in the modernisation of Iran's defence potential. Russia inherited almost all advanced military and technical universities from the Soviet Union, with Ukraine inheriting only a handful of top-tier Soviet-era military and technical education research and education institutions. Belarus inherited none, despite its good level of education and research institutions.

By cooperating with Russian universities, Iran was able to achieve three major goals. Firstly, it secured training for its experts in two ways: a) under the framework of general education programmes proposed by these universities (alongside Russian and other students); and b) through special programmes adapted to Iranian needs and conducted not only in Russia but also inside Iran. Secondly, it was able to use the research and design-related potential of these institutions. Thirdly, it used them as a resource for expertise: finding pools of experts, both as individuals and already well-established R&D collectives.

The training of Iranian technical specialists in Russia continued throughout the period under consideration in this dissertation. Three leading Russian universities with important military dimensions stand out for their cooperation with Iran: the so called Voenmeh Ustinov Baltic State Technical University (BGTU, also known as the Leningrad Mechanical Institute and Military Mechanical Institute), Moscow Aviation Institute, and Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology of Russia. On 8 January 1999, the US government imposed sanctions against Moscow Aviation Institute (MAI) and Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology of Russia (RKhTU). Sanctions were removed only on 21 May 2010 (RIA Novosti 22.05.2010). In January 1999, responding to US sanctions imposed on MAI, the university's acting rector Igor Prokhorov insisted that the Institute's cooperation with Iran did not involve technologies whose transfer was prohibited by international treaties (Dmitriev 1999).

According to some sources, the first Iranian students came to the MAI in the early 1990s. By 1996, there were 16 Iranian students at the institute studying engineering and missile technology, as well as some doctoral students [*aspiranty*] who were studying more specialised spheres like aerodynamics. All in all, 29 Iranians reportedly graduated from the MAI in 1990s-2000s, the last six in 2001, before the Institute's administration stopped

training Iranian students (Dobbs 2002).

MAI started interacting with Iranian educational and research centres in late 1994, and by January 1999 the Institute was participating in two projects to train specialists for Iran's aviation industry. 16 doctoral students [*aspiranty*] and 13 students from Iran studied in special MAI non-secret programmes. In 1999, this training cost \$180,000 in total. In addition, MAI helped Iran build a training centre in Isfahan in which Iranian specialists with degrees in an aviation-related fields could improve their qualifications. This project cost amount to \$100,000 (Dmitriev 1999).

Thus, the 604th Department (System Analysis and Direction) of the Aerospace Faculty of the Moscow Aviation Institute (MAI) publicly announced that students from Iran underwent training under the aegis of this department. According to official information these were MA students, as well as full-time and part-time doctoral students [*aspiranty i soiskateli*]. MAI did not specify the timing of their studies, but out of the context it can be concluded that the general time frame was the 1990-2000s (definitely before 2011, as presumably after 2011 no Iranian students studied there under the aegis of the department).

Before 2010, the Department arranged for the training of students in two specialties: 160703 “Flight Dynamics and Movement Direction of Aerial Vehicles” and 230301 - “Modelling and Studying Operations in Organisational Technical Systems.” Doctoral students could focus on the following thematic field: dynamics, ballistics and movement direction, studying operations and system analysis, special systems of information processing and direction. The Department also conducted research on ballistics and dynamics of various moving vehicles, including movement in the air, space and under water; optimal direction of dynamic systems; optimal assessment and planning of observations; designing the on-board based integrated systems of moving vehicles direction (rockets, space vehicles, underwater vehicles); modelling, analysis and synthesis of complex technical systems of automated flying vehicles, including satellite communication, observation and navigation systems; and studying robustness and reliability of complex systems (MAI 2014).

Since 1996, MAI teaching staff also went to Iran to lecture (Dobbs 2002) yet this was most likely on an officially unauthorised basis.

3.3.3. Results

In the 1990s, Iran received a broad array of defence-related equipment, goods and services from the Soviet Union and Russia. The annual volume of military and military technical

cooperation between Russia and Iran in the first half of the 1990s was estimated to be around \$500m (Kalinina 2013: 32). According to US sources, the volume of Russian conventional weapon sales to Iran in 1994 (and maybe also 1993 and 1992) came to \$1bn (*Washington Post* 28.09.1994 & *Los Angeles Times*, 29.09.1994). However, it is not clear what exactly these figures include – whether concluded contracts, general agreements or effective deliveries – and the figures themselves seem exaggerated in light of the details of Russian-Iranian defence-related cooperation revealed later and summarised in this Chapter. Russian-Iranian defence-related cooperation in this period also included transfers and services which were very hard to conceal from third parties eager to interfere, such as large consecutive contracts (selling submarines and constructing bases for them) or full-scale multi-year training of Iranian specialists at top Russian universities specialising in defence. The cooperation reached its highest points in 1990 and 1997. Russian-Iranian defence-related cooperation in the 1990s can be divided into two periods:

- 1992-1997, with average annual volumes reaching about \$500m;
- 1998-1999, with average annual volumes falling to \$300m, after some major transfers had been completed and others stopped or reduced as a result of Russian-American agreements.

While the figure for 1992-1997 refers to an assessment by Kalinina quoted above, the figure for 1998-1999 was produced by comparing known facts of both periods. This figure is indirectly corroborated by published Russian military export figures from 1998. According to these, while Iran remained a principal customer of Russia's arms industries, Rosvooruzhenie, a major arms exporter, earned over \$500m less in 1998 than in 1997, and almost \$1.5bn less than in 1996. All Russian arms exporters in 1998 earned about \$100m less than in the previous year (*Kommersant Vlast'* 27.04.1999: 18). Although this drop in sales cannot automatically be attributed to a reduction of arms deals with Iran, it is reasonable to assume that the Kremlin's decision to temper its defence-related deals with Tehran are at least partially responsible.

Especially starting in the mid-1990s Russia seems to have limited its transfer of licenses for equipment capable of advancing Iran's military capabilities enough for the latter to disrupt the balance of power in the region and foment local conflicts. Thus, Moscow sold only partial licenses for the Konkurs/Konkurs-M anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) systems. Tehran had to buy missiles for them well into the 2000s. This partial transfer might have led it to reverse-engineer another ATGM system, the US-made BGM-71 Tow

(manufactured in Iran as Toophan ATGM system).

The technological level of the equipment effectively transferred by Russia to Iran, along with the equipment for which new deals were concluded in this period, did not exceed the technological level of transfers during Soviet-Iranian defence-related cooperation in the late 1980s – 1990s. Iran's failed attempts to obtain Tu-22Ms illustrate this. The Tu-22M is a long-range bomber and maritime strike bomber, a variable-swing modification of the Tu-22, the first Soviet supersonic strategic bomber. Moscow denied Tehran this aircraft even though it had supplied earlier modifications of this aircraft – the Tu-22R (in its bomber variant and named Tu-22B) and Tu-22U – to Libya and Iraq in the 1970s.

Russia offering not yet mass-produced but even not yet developed arms became a trend in Russian-Iranian relations in the defence field during this period. Cases in point are the Ka-52 and Ka-60 helicopters, which were offered to Iran even before they were completely developed. Such offers and deals on semi-developed or not yet mass-produced equipment became a common practice for the Russian arms industries starting in the early 1990s, especially vis-a-vis China and India. Russian arms industries' aim at the time was to get foreign funding for design and development of new equipment. During this period Iranians had numerous opportunities to acquire design and development services, although probably only few of them were fruitful.

Sending students to study at top-tier former-Soviet universities proved more successful. In the 1990s, Iranians were able to study just about anything in Russia, even at universities that had formerly been closed to foreigners during Soviet times (like the Moscow Aviation Institute).

3.4. Relations between Iran and the Russian Federation in the Defence Sphere in the 2000s

3.4.1. Hardware and Materials

Air force. According to a contract signed in April 2001, Russia sold Iran 33 Mi-171 and Mi-171Sh multi-task military transport helicopters in 2002-2005. In 2005, Russia supplied Iran with another three Mi-17V-5 helicopters (TASS 2015).

In July 2006, Rosoboronexport delivered six Su-25T, a new anti-tank version of a ground-attack aircraft model to Iran. Unspecified guided missiles were supplied together with the planes. Most probably, Iran also received spare parts and upgrade kits for former Iraqi-owned Su-25s that Tehran kept after 1991 (Flight International 2006).

In June 2007, after revealing an alleged deal involving transfer of some Russian-made Pantsir SAM systems to Iran via Syria in May, the media reported about another such alleged deal on interceptor jets MiG-31 involving the same countries (Kiselev 2007). But in reality no such deal was concluded.

During Putin's visit to Iran in October 2007, Iranian officials discussed buying 50 RD-33 engines for \$150m. The negotiations also involved another agreement on delivery to Iran of a small number of RD-5000 engines to be installed on Shafaq aircraft (Lantratov 2007). The outcome of this deal remains unclear.

Although it is not clear whether the deal on RD-5000 was signed, there is some evidence that a contract on RD-33 was indeed concluded. After this visit Iran sent a request for buying a modification of RD-33 to Russia's Federal Service of Military Technical Cooperation (FSVTS) in 2007. A Russian official revealed that the engine had to be “adapted” for an “Iranian supersonic aircraft” which according to the *Kommersant* daily meant a new “multi-functional fighter jet” developed by Iranians to replace their F-5 and its modified Iranian version HESA Azarakhsh (Gritskova and Lantratov 2007). This might have meant the HESA Saegheh.

The deliveries of RD-33 to Iran started in 2008 (Frolov 2010). Moscow supplied Iran with 50 RD-33 and many critically required parts for fighter jets (Taghvaei 2012: 73). This information is corroborated by Iran's later achievements in overhaul and maintenance of its aircraft. These engines were not mainly used for Iranian-designed aircraft – which have never been produced in significant quantities – but apparently to overhaul and modernise the aircraft which the Iranian air force already possessed.

First, new RD-33 were installed on MiG-29s in need of new engines. Second, Tehran apparently overhauled the French-made Mirage F1 (obtained from Iraq), installing RD-33 on them. This could point to Russian participation in the latter project, as in the early 1990s Russia had developed a project for modernising the Mirage F1s of the South African Air Force. Some sources report that they could have been modernised by powering them with RD-33. However, in 1995 the Klimov Experimental Design Bureau designed another engine – the SMR-95, which was to be installed specifically on the Mirage F1 (OAO Klimov 2016). Thus, it remains unclear whether Tehran used RD-33 engines to overhaul its Mirages.

In October 2006, Homa Airlines announced its intent to finalise an agreement on the purchase of five Tu-204 aircraft (BBC Persian 20.10.2006) by the end of the month. Tu-204SM was developed as a result of serious modernisation of the Tu-204 – a medium-

range, primarily civil aircraft, which has some explicitly military modifications, namely Tu-204P (anti-submarine), Tu-204R (reconnaissance) and Tu-214ON (surveillance). A possible deal with Iran in the late 2000s and early 2010s was blocked by the US. The aircraft is powered by two PS-90A2 engines, the intellectual property rights for which were partly owned by the US company Pratt & Whitney. Russian manufacturers developed a model of the Tu-204 tailored to Iranian needs, as according to Deputy Minister of Industry of Russia Yuri Slusar, “the Tu-204SM project was originally created extra for Iran” (Voенно-promyshlennyi kuryer 17.09.2014).

In July 2008, OAO KVZ signed a contract on supplying two Mi-17V-5s (transport variant) to Iran. Allegedly, the Iranian Energy Ministry and its company Tavanir bought the helicopters, the contract came into force in January 2009, and the transfer was planned for April 2010 (Biznes Online 24.11.2009).

In October 2008, the Executive Director of the Kamov firm Roman Chernyshev announced that Kamov planned to sign a contract to deliver its helicopters to Iran by the end of 2008 (ITAR-TASS 30.10.2008). The head of Iran's Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO), Majid Hedayat, claimed: “Simultaneously we considered other offers, but the Ka-32 is the most affordable and reliable option for our country.” Neither the number of helicopters to be delivered nor the sum of the deal were disclosed. Still, Chernyshev insisted that “these are not military but civilian helicopters” (RIA Novosti 29.10.2008). Despite these assertions, it would have been possible for the military to operate or at least mobilise these helicopters, even if they were formally purchased by a non-military entity.

Air defence. In late 2005, an unspecified source from Russia's Federal Service for Military Technical Cooperation announced that Iran and Russia had prepared and approved the draft of a contract for the delivery of S-125-2A Pechora-2A SAM systems. The Pechora, a short-range SAM system, was supposedly intended for Iran in the second quarter of 2006 (Grani.ru 2005), but the deal was never implemented. Instead of the Pechora, in December 2005, Russia concluded a contract with Iran on 29 SAM units of Tor-M1 for between \$700m (Makienko 2007) or \$1.4bn (TASS 2015).

The Tor-M1, another SAM system, has a shooting range of 12-14 km and is a fully mobile air defence system which moves with troops. According to some reports, the delivery included the transfer of 17 fully tracked systems which remained of a contract with Greece, and 12 towed Tor-M1T systems (Makienko 2007). The latter modification of Tors were designed specially by the Almaz-Antei Concern for Iran. The SAM systems were delivered to Iran very soon – in 2006, with the final instalment arriving in January 2007 (TASS

2015). In addition, Russia supplied Iran with 1,200 9M331 Tor-M1 SAM systems and spare parts for the equipment. During this process, at least 2007 Russian instructors trained Iranians to work with the Tors (Poroskov 2007).

Around the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007, the Russian-Iranian negotiations on the sale of Russia-made S-300 SAM systems started. They were conducted secretly, and Moscow denied their conduct. However, Tehran leaked information to the media. On 26 December 2007, Iran's Defence Minister Mustafa Mohammad Najar announced that the previous night Iran had signed a contract with Russia on the purchase of S-300 SAM systems (FARS 26.12.2007).

Some Russian media sources also assumed that the deal on the S-300s had been concluded, and quoted an anonymous highly-positioned official in Russia's defence industries as saying that the agreement concerned the delivery of 30-40 such systems, and the document was initialed by the Federal Service for Military Technical Cooperation and Iran's Defence Ministry. Some time before Najar's statement, the director of the Federal Service for Military Technical Cooperation, Mikhail Dmitriev, summarised the results of the fourth meeting of the Joint Commission on Military Technical Cooperation by saying that the deliveries of the S-300 to Iran had not been debated, although “it is allowed by all regimes”, and Russia did not see Iran as a pariah state. Hence it “would consider” possible requests by Iran to purchase defensive armaments, as long as they are not prohibited by international agreements (Poroskov 2007). The FARS news agency, which had also reported on Najar's statement, also deleted the piece.

This secretive approach, even outright denials, were common practice during Russian arms sales throughout the period under consideration (in the mid-2000s Russian officials denied the existence of sales of Iskander tactical ballistic missile systems and Strelets man-portable SAM systems to Syria; it was soon proved that they took place).

This was also the case for the S-300, a deal which was probably concluded at the very end of December 2007. According to FARS news agency, the contract concerned the purchase of five Russian S-300 “systems” (most probably batteries) for \$800mln (FARS 15.02.2014).

Russia apparently tried to implement the agreement and took at least some measures to that end. The equipment was produced and almost prepared for delivery; by October 2009 there were reports that the equipment could be delivered at any time. Moreover, the “implementation of the plans [*on the delivery of S-300 to Iran*] was delayed because of an order from the top” (Lenta.ru 01.10.2009). Iranian military personnel were also being

trained for some time, even after the decision not to deliver the S-300 had been taken (Tebyan 30.06.1390). Finally, the first Russian-Iranian deal on the S-300 was completely rescinded when on 22 September 2010 Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed the Decree on Measures to Be Taken to Implement the Resolution of the UN Security Council No. 1929 of 9 June 2010.

In 2007, when Syria purchased the Pantsir-S1E, a short- to medium-range SAM and anti-aircraft artillery system from Russia, some media sources published information to the effect that part of the purchased equipment would be transferred from Syria to Iran (Jane's Defence Weekly 18.05.2007). Damascus signed a contract with Moscow to acquire 50 Pantsirs for \$730m, ten of which should have been relayed to Iran. Iran paid for them itself and also compensated Syria for its complicity in the deal. Russian government officials repeatedly denied the existence of this scheme (Kommersant 24.05.2007 & Izvestiya 21.08.2008); it is indeed possible that they had no knowledge of it.

The weapons should have been transferred to Tehran in late 2008, and Iran allegedly expressed interest in purchasing as many as 50 Pantsirs (Jane's Defence News 22.05.2007). This weapons system is also used to protect the S-300. No direct confirmation has ever been published on Iran possessing Pantsirs, although authoritative international publications claim that Tehran possesses ten such systems (as of 2016).

Two Kasta-2E2 radars and two 1L119 Nebo-SVU radars were supplied to Iran by Russia in the late 2000s (Tsentr AST 2015). The exact timing is unknown, but both systems were apparently publicly displayed for the first time at a military parade in Tehran in 2010. Both systems are modern types and they are used by the Russian army itself. This is perhaps why Tehran has been so keen to display them for the media since 2010.

Missiles. There were reports that by October 2001, negotiations between Russia and Iran on the sale of the 9K720 Iskander-E mobile short-range ballistic missile system were approaching their final phase (Iran Report 02.10.2001).

Ground forces. In February 2003, Kurganmashzavod reportedly received an order for 300 BMP-2 for about \$60m from Iran. The order was to be carried out in 2004 (Dmitriev 2007). However, there is no final confirmation that this took place. At any rate, the probable deal on BMP-2 illustrates the reduction of transfers of Russian armour to Iran. According to the TASS news agency, Tehran had earlier negotiated the possible purchase of up to 1,000 BMP-2 with Moscow. It was expected that Iran would place further orders for these vehicles, and in the future also buy BMP-3 and BMP-3F (Dmitriev 2007). While BMP-3 is used by infantry, BMP-3F is a vehicle for marines operating at sea. However, no

further Iranian orders for Russian armoured vehicles followed until the end of the period under consideration.

Russia sold Iran an unknown quantity of the 152/155 mm cannon-launched, semi-automatic laser-guided projectile Krasnopol' (Tsentrist AST 2015). These projectiles were apparently supplied to Tehran on a stable basis since the early 2000s until the early 2010s. In August 2003, the US reported that Russia supplied Krasnopol-M to Iran (Barabanov 2006). In November 2010, after the UN Security Council imposed sanction on Iran banning sale of many types of weapons to Tehran, and after President Medvedev cancelled the sale of SAM S-300 systems to Iran, Russian factories continued to implement the Krasnopol projectiles contract with Iran. They argued that these projectiles were not covered by the UN resolution (Nikolski 2010).

In February 2004, Sverdlovsk Province regional authorities announced that the Federal State Unitary Enterprise *Uralvagonzavod* was considering the possibility of manufacturing 200 T-80 tanks for Iran. The order to manufacture the tanks was initially sent to the Omsk plant (Omsktransmash), but the latter allegedly did not have the capacity to cope with such a large order, so experts at Uralvagonzavod studied the possibility of producing tanks at Uralvagonzavod with the possible involvement of Omsktransmash (NVO 2004). In the mid-2000s, Iran also expressed its readiness to buy T-90S (Dmitriev 2007).

Navy. At this time, Iran desperately needed to modernise its navy and wished to develop amphibious capacities. In March 2001, when President Khatami of Iran visited Russia and Moscow and Tehran made an attempt to resume bilateral defence cooperation, the media reported that Iran was interested in new purchases, *inter alia*, buying landing [*desantnyi kater*] and missile boats. During this visit, the two sides reportedly discussed plans to “modernise” (which can mean continuing construction) the basing facilities for Kilo-class submarines (Chernov 2001), but the talks never resulted in a deal.

In May 2001, the media reported a possible sale by Russia to Iran of P-800 Yakhont anti-ship cruise missiles (Kommersant 28.08.2010b). When Iran's Defence Minister Shamkhani visited Russia in October 2001, new reports were published on Iran's interest in buying P-800 Yakhont and P-700 Granit naval anti-ship cruise missiles (surface-to-surface variants) (Gazeta.ru 02.10.2001). According to another source, the negotiations on Yakhonts were nearing their final phase by October 2001 (Iran Report 02.10.2001). It is highly unlikely that Moscow was seriously discussing selling the P-700 Granit, as it was both too sensitive an item (because of the option to install a nuclear warhead on it) and Iran had no platform (e.g., battle cruiser) to launch the missile from. It could only launch it from a land-based

site, which would increase the vulnerability and diminish other combat qualities of the weapon. In contrast, the P-700 Yakhont was a more likely target of negotiations, as Russia has been selling these missiles and their technology to a number of countries since the early 2000s (e.g., India, Vietnam).

At the same time, Russia's *Interfax-Agentstvo Voennykh Novostey* news agency reported that Russian defence analysts were expecting Shamkhani to order the export variant of the Project 20382 Tigr corvette, worth over \$50 million a piece (Iran Report 08.10.2001). However, there is no solid evidence that such a deal was discussed. In the early 2010s, Russia sold two warships of that class to Algeria.

In late November 2005, Russia signed a series of contracts on the sale of military equipment and overhaul services to Iran, including patrol boats for Iran's navy (Lenta.ru 2005). The types of boats, price of the deal, conditions and number of items have never been published, and the contract was never implemented.

According to other authoritative sources, a package deal concluded with Iran in December 2005 also included patrol boats. In particular, Iran allegedly intended to buy several boats of Project 12421 armed with Moskit missile launchers using supersonic anti-ship missiles. In addition, Iran was interested in buying Russian-made corvettes (ARMS-TASS 2007). It is noteworthy that the above-mentioned patrol boats were modification of Project 12421 boats and were deployable in the Caspian Sea. In fact, Turkmenistan possesses two similar boats. Western experts regard them as missile corvettes.

In the mid-2000s, the Russian Design Bureau Malakhit, which had designed the Piranha submarine (Project 865 Losos Piranha Submarines), tried to find a market for its mini-submarines in the Middle East. It announced: “the administration of the Design Bureau Malakhit believes that this region, especially the Persian Gulf countries, will become a leading market for the [*midget*] submarines, since the Gulf is too shallow for the submarines of standard size.” However, they reportedly “faced strong competition from local companies producing submarines of this class”, especially companies from Iran and the UAE (Middle East Newswire 2005). No deals on mini-submarines are known to have been concluded between Iran and Russia in 1989-2015.

Nevertheless, in the late 2000s, Tehran cautiously continued sounding out opportunities for acquiring ships from Russia. In March 2009, during a visit to Iran, Tatarstan's Minister of Industry and Trade Alexander Kogogin discussed the possibility of Iranian firms' cooperation with ship-building firm Zelenodolsk M.Gorki Works. In February 2010, the General Consul of Iran in Kazan Reza Baghban Kondori visited the works, where he

learned about both civilian and “special [*military*] production” (Zelenodolskaya Pravda 03.02.2010). Finally, in October 2011, OAO United Shipbuilding Corporation (OSK) and OAO Zelenodolsk M. Gorki Works announced their desire to start working with Iranian companies. Although Zelenodolsk Works allegedly wanted to start supplying Iran with “sea civilian ships and sea-river ships and barges,” the Works is known for many types of military ships, including some ships of the Russian Caspian Flotilla.

Remarkably, OSK dared to announce its intentions despite the possible political risks due to the sanctions against Iran. It bears noting that the corporation was also involved in building Mistral helicopter carriers together with France (Kiseleva and Popov 2011). This fact increased the risks of possible repercussions related to the response of third parties to cooperation with Iran.

Military experts close to the Russian government later claimed that before bilateral cooperation between Iran and Russia were halted in 2010, Russian defence industries considered Iran a prospective customer for various types of surface vessels. In particular, they expected that Tehran would buy missile and patrol boats, corvettes and the landing vessels Murena and Zubr (Mirovaya trgovlya 2015).

A possible sale of the Project 677 submarines was again discussed in 2009. A specialised Russian website reported on Iran, China and India displaying a “particular interest” for Lada-class submarines. To meet the needs of these foreign customers, Russian designers developed an export version of these submarines: Project 1650 Amur (Korabelnyi Portal 2009).

Border control. During a 2001 visit to Russia by Iranian Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani, the two countries discussed the possible purchase of border control equipment, which was then included in a list of equipment sought by Tehran. Iranian officials explained that the equipment would be installed on the 800-kilometre-long and largely porous Iranian-Afghan border. To begin with, Iran planned to buy two stationary sets of border control equipment and install them on a 40 km-long segment of the border. However, competition between factions within the Iranian government reportedly nipped this idea in the bud (ITAR-TASS 02.10.2001).

According to another source, nothing came of the talks and in March 2007 a delegation from Iran's Internal Ministry once again visited Russia to negotiate a possible deal concerning the purchase of border control equipment (Panarmenian.net 02.04.2007). The details and results of the talks were never disclosed.

3.4.2. Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge

Design and Development. The only proven project from this time involved development of an aircraft known under three different names as Integral, Shafagh and Borhan. Citing unspecified Russian news sources, the IHS Janes Defence Weekly related that “in the early 2000s the Shafaq was being developed as part of a co-operative effort involving Mikoyan Design Bureau and other major entities of the Russian aerospace industry.”

However, representatives of Iran's Malek Ashtar University– which were involved in the project in 2005 – insisted that the Shafagh/Borhan project “was started in Iran and will be completed in Iran.” In 2014, Iranian HESA representatives acknowledged the involvement of Russian designers at the beginning of the project and conceded the existence of Russian “assistance on wind tunnel validations of the modified design” (Johnson 2014). Anyway, the aircraft was planned to have been built with a Russia-made engine and ejection seat.

Licensed Production. In the 2000s, Tehran continued its attempts to establish at least assembly production of military hardware. Iran started negotiations on the establishment of a series assembly production of Ka-32 in approximately 2005. However, they were then suspended, and the issue was again raised by Tehran in late 2007. The Russian media then reported on the development of a version of Ka-32 modified for Iranian conditions. According to a source from Russia's defence industries, Iran wished to establish a series assembly production line to manufacture the helicopters and a facility to overhaul helicopter engines (Gritskova and Lantratov 2007).

In October 2008, the Executive Director of the Firm Kamov, Roman Chernyshev, announced that the firm was planning to sign a contract on the delivery of their helicopters to Iran by the end of 2008. It allegedly included both delivery of helicopters and the establishment of a licensed production line to manufacture civil helicopters in Iran, similar to plans for the Tu-204. The Executive Director of the Aircraft Industry Organisation of Iran's Defence Ministry, Majid Hedayat, confirmed this information and specified that Iran was going to conclude a contract to produce 50 Ka-32 civilian helicopters with Kamov in Iran (ITAR-TASS 30.10.2008 & RIA Novosti 29.10.2008)

By 2008, according Chernyshev, “the Russian aircraft manufacturers have reached similar arrangements [*with regard to Tu-204 aircraft*] with Iran [*as on Ka-32 helicopters*].” He had in mind the sale of more than 100 Tu-204 aircraft with subsequent organisation of licensed production (RIA Novosti 29.10.2008). A possible deal with Iran in the late 2000s and early 2010s was blocked by the US Government.

Technology Transfer. In the early 2000s, Iran was much more successful at acquiring advanced Soviet torpedo technology. This process started in the late 1990s, although the source from which Iran received the necessary know-how and, possibly, specimen models is unknown. At any rate, by the early 2000s, Iran had deployed the newest Soviet-designed Shkval torpedo. It also had the necessary technology at its disposal and was probably manufacturing similar arms under the name Hoot. Edward Pope, a former US Naval Intelligence officer, insisted that not only was the Hoot built according to essentially Russian design, Russia also actively helped Iran to develop it. As he testified: "I was informed in the late 1990s by a Russian government official that they were working with Iran on this subject [...] A cooperative demonstration/program had already been conducted with them at Lake Issyk Kul in Kyrgyzstan" (Axe 2006)

In February 2005, Iran officially launched its Hoot torpedo production. At the inauguration ceremony, Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani proclaimed that thereby: "the Islamic Republic's defensive cycle at sea" was complete (Xinhuanet 2005). No specific details are known about the types of torpedoes produced at the time. Nonetheless, the Hoot torpedo (mushak-e zir-e sathi-ye hut) was displayed on 2 April 2006 at the military exercise Payambar-e Aazam 3. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov immediately dismissed allegations that his country had participated in production of the Hoot torpedo demonstrated by Iran and noted that many countries supplied weapons to Iran (Iran Daily 2006). The deputy commander of the Navy of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, Ali Fadavi, claimed that the torpedo test was the result of six years of effort by the Iranian Aerospace Industries (Dareini 2006).

Many military technical experts considered the Hoot to be reverse-engineered from the Soviet VA-111 Shkval and/or its Russian modifications. According to Richard Fisher, "Iranian TV footage confirmed the Hoot's basic similarity to the Shkval" (Fisher 2006). The Shkval torpedo functions using the supercavitation effect, a technology of particular sophistication. The technology is relatively unique, and Iran would have had huge difficulties developing it on its own: later, an Iranian official effectively admitted the Russian origin of the Hoot. Speaking in May 2014, the IRGC Navy Commander (in 2006 - deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guard Navy) Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said: "[t]he gruesome weapon was originally made by the Russians" and added that Iran became one of two countries with the weapon at its disposal (FARS 06.05.2014).

Remarkably, Russian news agency *RIA Novosti* reported on Fadavi's statement without mentioning the Shkval or the existence of a Russian analogue with identical technical

characteristics (RIA Novosti 07.05.2014). It may reflect Russia's desire to suppress information concerning links between the Shkval and the Hoot.

Training. During a visit to Tehran in December 2000, Russia's Defence Minister Igor Sergeev reached some general agreements with his Iranian counterpart Ali Shamkhani on training Iranian officers at Russian military schools (Korotchenko 2001), maybe even signing a formal agreement to that effect (Eggert 2001).

Some Iranian officers did indeed receive regular military education in Russia. For example, it is known that such contracts were signed in 2002 with Russia's defence ministry. These involved providing regular military education for a very limited number of Iranian personnel. Russian military officials emphasised the financial gains related to these deals: the total income from the contracts signed in 2002 for training of the military personnel of India, China, Malaysia, Syria, the UAE, Greece, Ethiopia, Peru, Guinea, Iran and other countries came to about \$39m (Bogdanchikov 2002). These contracts specifically entailed educational programmes which lasted several years, and not short-term courses.

In the early 2000s, the Russian government took measures to expel Iranian students from a number of leading Russian universities. Some media claimed that the decision had to do with "spy scandals in early 2000s," yet probably the problem was caused by the US reaction to Iranians training at these universities. After the spy scandals, the Russian government reportedly issued an informal order forbidding Iranian citizens from studying anything but the humanities. As a result, such major technology universities as MIFI [*National Research Nuclear University MEPhI (Moscow Engineering Physics Institute)*], MFTI [*Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology*], and MAI [*Moscow Aviation Institute*] stopped accepting them (Kozlov 2012).

Despite this measure, cooperation did not completely stop, instead becoming increasingly dependent on private initiative and risk-prone individuals in key positions. In 2009, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov complained that: "training of foreigners in Russian universities should be regarded not only as a source of additional revenues, but also as vital for state science and technology policy."

This apparently required limiting access to some educational programmes for foreign students from some countries. Ivanov designated several fields of study as "sensitive to national security" and emphasised that the access of foreign students to them should be restricted accordingly, including missile and nuclear technology. According to him, the Baltic State Technical University was among the first offenders of these restrictions: "some eight years ago, there were some problems [*with the University*], and we had to intervene

at the highest level and bring the rector to his senses” (Dmitriev 2009). The incident he was referring to was the university’s engagement with Iranians despite Russian government bans.

Overhaul and Modernisation. By the early 2000s, Iran was in increasing need of overhaul and repairs services for its Soviet- and Russia-made equipment. The large amount of equipment transferred to Iran in the late 1980s and early 1990s had by then been in use for some time and needed routine overhauling. Tehran concluded several such agreements with post-Soviet firms. For example, the P.I. Baranov Omsk Engine Building Association signed a contract with Iran on the overhaul of Sukhoi military aircraft engines in 2000, providing the services at least in 2002-2004. The engines were overhauled and repaired in Omsk (IA Regnum 05.04.2004). Although the Omsk firm provides such services not only for the AL 21 F-3A installed on Su-22 and Su-24 but also for the RD-33 installed on MiG-29, the contract with Iran concerned only the former engine type (IA Regnum. 05.04.2004).

In July 2005, it was revealed that Rosoboronexport was negotiating with Iran on the overhaul and modernisation of Iran's submarines. Upgrades were to include installation on submarines of the new anti-ship missile complex 3M-54 Klub-S with a target distance of 200 km. The contracts negotiated for the overhaul of each submarine reportedly cost \$80m to \$90m each. Two firms - Zvezdochka Co (Severodvinsk) and Admiralty Shipyards (Saint Petersburg) competed for the contracts (Gritskova and Lantratov 2005).

According to one report, later in 2005, Russian specialists at Zvezdochka Shipyards started work on the overhaul of one Iranian submarine in Bandar Abbas. The initial agreement between Russian and Iran stipulated that the second submarine would come to Zvezhdochka for overhaul. However, another unknown Russian ship-building plant could have taken this order away from Zvezdochka (Gritskova 2005). This would mostly likely to have been Admiralty Shipyards.

According to other reports, negotiations continued at least into the spring of 2006 (Vesti.ru. 20.04.2006). Moreover, the Iranian government insisted on conducting the overhaul on Iranian territory and even refused to allow any parts of the submarines to be transported to Russia for testing and other necessary work (Yazdi 1391). Work (in Iranian terminology - “semi-fundamental overhaul”) on the first submarine, Tareq, started in Bandar Abbas before August 2007 (Voенно-promyshlennyi kuryer 12.06.2012). The same overhauls started on the two other submarines later.

At any rate, there is evidence that the overhauls were implemented with Russian participation in the second half of the 2000s (G.N. 2011). According to one report, because

of the UN sanctions against Iran Russia also stopped overhauling Iran's submarines in 2010. The work thus remained incomplete, and Iranians had to somehow finish the job on their own (Voennyi obozrevatel 29.05.2012). While work on the first submarine, Tareq, was in an advanced stage when the Russians left and Iranians took over (completing the overhaul by May 2012), the overhaul of the two other submarines had just started when Iranians lost Russian support. Thus, on the two other vessels, only “repairs approximating semi-fundamental overhauls” were conducted (Yazdi 1391). The Klub-S anti-ship missile systems were not installed on the submarines.

Also in 2005-2006, GPTP Granit, a firm belonging to Kontsern PVO Almaz-Antei Concern, a Russian corporation specialised in air defence systems, carried out modernisation of Kvadrat, a mobile SAM system, an export version of 2K12 Kub, in Iran (GPTP Granit 2006). It remains unknown how many items were modernised, when the project was completed, and whether it continued after 2006.

At the end of July 2006, Russia and Iran concluded a contract for the modernisation of 30 of Iran's Su-24 bombers. The AKhK Sukhoi was designated as the organisation to implement the contract (Gritskova, Safronov and Sidorov 2006). Most probably, it was implemented in the late 2000s.

Alongside the deal on selling engines to Iran, in 2007 RSK MiG discussed a possible life-extension and modernisation programme for Iran's MiG-29s with Iran's HESA. This programme was to include measures such as: ensure service-life extension for the MiG-29 for a further 20 years; increase the overhaul cycle of RD-33 engine and airframe; avionics modernisation, modernisation of arms and fire control systems, inertial navigation system, etc.; modernisation of air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons (to deploy R-27ER, R-27ET and R-77 missiles, laser-guided bombs); installation of a retractable in-flight refuelling probe and an increase in internal fuel capacity. RSK MiG and HESA almost finalised the deal in 2008, but Russia gave in to Western pressure (Taghvaei 2012: 73).

3.4.3. Results

Total volume of military hardware transfers to Iran in 2000-2007 reached \$1.96bn, making up 5.4% of Russia's military exports (TASS 2015). Undoubtedly, a significant part of this sum relates to Tor SAM systems deals and contracts for dual-use helicopters.

In an assessment by the Moscow-based Centre for Analysis of World Arms Trade, in 2003-2010, Iran bought “military-use products” from Russia worth \$2.01bn (TSAMTO 2011: 168-169). It is noteworthy that this assessment has been referred to even by an Iranian

diplomat who worked at the time in Iran's embassy to Moscow (Mahdiyari 2014: 115). Defence-related cooperation between Russia and Iran in the 2000s can be split into two periods:

- 2000-2007, with average annual volumes of transfers reaching about \$250m
- 2008-2010, with average annual volumes dwindling to \$150m. This period saw a fall in the technological level of equipment involved in effective transfers and concluded deals. The only major exception to this tendency was the sale of a Tor-M1 SAM system, which was the newest modification of the system introduced by the Soviet army in 1991. However, Iran was not the first foreign customer, as these systems had already been exported in the late 1990s to Greece.

Notably, during this period Russia did not supply Iran with military equipment, including technologies or services which would have expanded its military capacities. The case of the advanced Shkval torpedo seems to belong to the previous epoch; it could even have come into Iranian hands from other post-Soviet republics.

The bulk of Russian exports constituted products (spare parts, munition, etc) and services (maintenance, overhaul and modernisation) which merely maintained Iranian defence capacities at their existing level. Moscow also limited Iranian access to advanced training in defence-relevant fields.

Even though Russia itself had interest in securing the Iranian-Afghan border to stop the flow of drugs (ITAR-TASS 02.10.2001), Moscow was not willing to give Iran border control equipment in the 2000s, and the issue was delayed for years and was probably ultimately fruitless.

The clear decrease in sophistication of equipment, services and technologies supplied by Russia to Iran in this period was caused by Russia's concerns over a possible reaction from those states which opposed Iranian policies. But other factors were also in play, such as shrinking competition as fewer and fewer countries dared deal with Iran. For instance, even the Chinese government promised Washington not to supply cruise missiles to Iran in exchange for certain concessions during a 1998 visit to Beijing by US Secretary of Defence William Cohen (Vlasov 1998).

This meant that Tehran had little choice but to buy equipment, services and technologies on Moscow's terms. In its turn, Moscow was not forced to outbid other suppliers – unlike during earlier Soviet and Russian dealings with Iran. Thus, Russia was able to dictate its own terms and determine the level of sophistication of goods and services sold.

3.5. Relation between Iran and the Russian Federation in the Defence Sphere in 2010-2015

3.5.1. Hardware and Materials

Air force. In September 2014, the United Aircraft Manufacturing Corporation (OAK) announced its intention to “organise” assembly of TU-204SM aircraft in Iran. After a meeting of the joint intergovernmental commission, Russia's Energy Minister Aleksandr Novak also related that the two sides additionally discussed supplying finished aircraft and maintenance. Earlier, Russia and Iran had discussed the possibility of delivering Tu-204SM and were close to concluding a contract. However, the US was able to block the deal as the US-designed and -manufactured PS-90A2 engine was installed on the aircraft.

In February 2014, Yuri Slusar, Russia's Deputy Minister of Industry, stated that Russia had acquired the intellectual property rights on the Tu-204SM (PS-90A2)'s engine, which had been partially owned by the US company Pratt & Whitney (Voenno-promyshlennyi kuryer 17.09.2014). Certain hurdles impeding a possible deal with Tehran on sales of the plane or its licensed manufacturing in Iran were thus removed; apparently, the rights had been acquired for this very purpose. However, no further steps followed.

Air defence. In October 2011, Russia's Deputy Director of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, Konstantin Biryulin, announced that Russia had supplied Iran with electronic warfare equipment such as the 1L222 Avtobaza and was negotiating supply of the next batch of the same system.

In Biryulin's words: *We are constantly negotiating with Iran about the purchase of military equipment by this country which is not subject to UN sanctions. These are defensive systems, in this particular case we are talking about electronic warfare equipment... We are not talking about aeroplanes, submarines, or even S-300 systems.*” (RIA Novosti 26.10.2011). By 2015, Russia had reportedly supplied Iran with two Avtobaza units (Tsentr AST 2015).

In September 2012, the Russian media reported on Iran's “interest” in acquiring the Pantsir-S1E, a short- to medium-range SAM and anti-aircraft artillery system (Voenno-promyshlennyi kuryer 21.09.2012). In March 2015, Russian sources also reported on Iran “having ordered” [*zakazany*] Pantsir systems (Litovkin 2015), which means that they had not yet been transferred to Tehran.

As Russia's relations with the West deteriorated, Moscow began to re-examine its decision not to sell Tehran the S-300. Nevertheless, even after having reviewed its decision, Russia

offered Tehran another system, the Antei-2500, as a replacement for the non-delivered S-300. Iran disagreed, and the former Iranian ambassador to Russia explained that decision by citing the following reasons: a) longer delivery time (allegedly six years), the system's capacities (“some technical features of this system are better than those of the S-300 while some are worse”), and the price (“several times higher [than for the S-300]”). Moreover, “the S-300 corresponded completely to [*the requirements of*] our defence system” (Leontieva 2014).

In April 2015, President Putin signed a decree revoking the ban on sale of S-300 to Iran. In June, the Assistant to the President of Russia on military-technical cooperation, Vladimir Kozhin, announced that Moscow and Tehran were drawing up a contract on the sale of S-300s. In June, a senior representative of the Russian military-industrial complex told *RIA Novosti* that Iran could acquire S-300s from the existing arms stocks of the Russian Defense Ministry, as their production had stopped (*RIA Novosti* 22.07.2015). The systems ordered by Iran were delivered in 2015-2016.

Ground forces. Russia might have supplied Iran with Kornet-E anti-tank laser-guided missiles as well as transferred the technology on manufacturing the weapon (Tsentr AST 2015). However, there is no definitive evidence of this. A number of Russian and Western experts believe that Iran acquired the weapon either directly from Syria or via Hezbollah or Hamas, subsequently reverse-engineering the Kornet-E. In July 2012, Iran officially inaugurated production of Dehlaviye ant-armour missiles, which are considered to be an Iranian version of the Kornet (Meyer 2012). Most probably, the transfer of equipment and perhaps technology occurred in the early 2010s.

Some intermittent cooperation between Iran and Russia's Sozvezdie concern on military communication equipment existed in the 2000s and 2010s. The Voronezh-based concern supplied communications equipment for armoured vehicles sold to Iran. In February 2013, top managers at Sozvezdie announced their intent to relaunch sales of radio-communications equipment to Iran, train Iranian specialists, instruct them on the technology of organising equipment production, and modernise equipment supplied earlier. Sozvezdie also planned to conduct joint research activities and develop new communications devices (Shamakina and Vasilchenko 2013).

Navy. In early 2010, *RIA Novosti* reported on Iran's interest in the Soviet-designed midget submarine Piranha (Project 865 Piranha Submarine, Losos version), referring to a statement by a representative of the Malakhit Design Bureau. On 1 July 2011, however, Oleg Azizov, an official at *Rosoboronexport*, said that Russia had not negotiated with Iran

on the sale or any other deal involving Piranhas (Vzglyad 01.08.2011).

However, responding to a question on whether the Piranha is covered by UN Security Council sanctions, a representative of Rosoboronexport insisted that: “Here [*in the case of Piranha*] we have the same situation as with the S-300, an anti-aircraft system which is not an offensive armament but a purely defensive one.” He did not deny the possibility that Piranhas could be supplied to Iran. In all, only two Piranhas were built, and in 2011 Azizov claimed that Piranhas could not be delivered anywhere and “the Piranha project was terminated a long time ago [...] the only option is to build them taking into account the technical requirements of the foreign customer's order, i.e., to do a joint project” (RIA Novosti 01.07.2011).

It is unknown which foreign customer, if any, had been found, but development continued and in 2014 a new modification of the Piranha was presented. According to the General Director of the firm SPMBM Malakhit, Vladimir Dorofeev, “The boat [*Piranha*] shall be employed in coastal area and in shallow waters like the Caspian Sea. [...] Its potential buyers could be countries which possess hydrocarbon deposits in shelf areas needing defence.” More specifically, he named Kazakhstan (Gundarov 2014), although Iran also generally fits this description.

3.5.2. Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge

Overhaul and modernisation. Iran attempted but failed to come to an agreement on the next regular semi-fundamental overhaul of its Soviet-made submarines in the 2010s. Russia insisted that it had played a role in the overhaul (Haaretz 18.09.2012), although Iranian officials categorically dismissed these claims. In reality, Iran probably lacked the capabilities to do this completely on its own, and some Russian involvement seems likely, although this does not exclude the possibility that the overhaul was generally carried out by Iranians.

At a September 2012 ceremony in Bandar Abbas celebrating the relaunch of the Tareq 901 submarine, the commander of the Navy of the Iranian Army, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, complained that the “country of origin had failed to deliver plans for the submarine's parts and was insisting on repairing the submarine at its own facilities.”

He elaborated:

“When we wanted to begin repairing the Tareq submarine, ... Russians wanted to bring some sensitive and vital mechanisms of the submarine back to their country; they told [us] that we did not have test stands or the necessary placements and equipment That

we should send these mechanisms [to Russia] and let them test and assess them there. ... But after repairs in our country started and Russians lost hope that the details would be moved [to Russia], they came back and wanted to take just a few of vital mechanisms of the submarine ... to test and assess in Russia ... if we had not attentively studied overhaul documents ..., the systems would easily have gone to Russia. Given these sanctions, they would not have returned to Iran, and we would be left with an empty shell of Tareq submarine.” (Yazdi 1391)

At least since late 2014 and early 2015, the Russian company Kupol Works negotiated the possible modernisation of Tor-M1 with Iran. In January 2015, a representative of the Kupol Works confirmed that his firm was still supplying the Iranian military with spare parts and training Iranian personnel. At the same time, Iranians themselves were conducting technical maintenance and repairs of Tors (RIA Novosti 29.01.2015).

3.5.3. Results

According to a probably biased source, in 2010-2012 Iran imported arms worth more than \$500m with Russia as a “main provider” (Al Jazeera 10.10.2012). However, these numbers seem exaggerated, as no major contracts or deliveries are known to have occurred during that time period. The volume of military-technical cooperation remained minimal and in 2010-2013 annual deliveries hardly exceeded \$100m on average.

According to an Iranian source, as a result of cancelling the contract on S-300s in 2010, Russia incurred direct losses of \$800m. Moreover, Moscow lost its “full portfolio of orders” to be fulfilled in 2011-2014, amounting to \$2.8bn. It also alienated a major market for military products (Mahdiyán 2014: 119). As a result of the presidential decree on implementation of the UN Security Council resolution No. 1929, Russia not only halted the delivery of S-300 SAM systems to Iran, it also disrupted a large number of other defence-related deliveries and deals (Tulskii oruzheinyi... 2010).

Contacts increased after 2013, and negotiations on major deals started again in 2014. The annual volume of deliveries in the 2014-2015 period was about \$300m, with the major deal on S-300 sales being the largest contributor.

The technological level of Russian-Iranian defence-related cooperation in these years reached a historic low point. Essentially, Moscow only supplied Iran with spare parts and generally refused to provide overhaul and modernisation services for Russian-supplied equipment. The only significant transfer of equipment in these years involved radars, which were apparently intended to help Iran cautiously deter Western and Israeli plans to

attack its nuclear facilities. Interestingly, even after the revival of Russian-Iranian interactions in the defence field since 2014, the only major transfer of equipment involved S-300 SAM system in 2015-2016. Although these expanded Iran's defence capacities, they were by the time a relatively old system which the Russian army had started to decommission.

3.6. Relation between Iran and Ukraine in the Defence Sphere in the 1990s

3.6.1. Hardware

Air Force. There are reliable reports that Iran acquired MiG-21 fighter jets from Ukraine, as well as ammunition and spare parts for Soviet and Russian equipment, especially MiG-29 and Su-24MK aircraft (Volovych 2011b).

Thus, due to Moscow's refusal to supply Iran with further MiG fighter jets in the early 1990s, Tehran looked for other possible sources, namely Kyiv. Fearing a probable reaction from the US, however, the Ukrainian government refused to sell Iran 40 of the MiG-29s Tehran had asked for, though Ukrainian army did not need them and kept stored (Taghvaei 2012: 72).

There were reports that Ukraine sold Iran 50 MIG-29 fighter jets in the early 1990s (Mycio and Efron 1994; Izvestiya 12.05.1993). These figures for MiG are certainly exaggerated, and only a few aircraft could have been sold this way.

Later on, in 1997-1998, Ukraine delivered 12 An-74 military transport airplanes to Iran (Natsionalna bezpeka i oborona 2000: 34). The delivered planes were of the An-74-200 modification (Preyger 2009: 10) and the deal amounted to \$133m. The deal should have been followed by the establishment of service centres for Antonov aircraft in Iran (Kompanion 2003), but they never materialised.

Air Defence. There are reliable claims that Iran acquired some SAM systems, ammunition, spare parts for Soviet and Russian equipment from Ukraine (S-300) (Volovych 2011b). There were also reports that in 1993 Iran acquired ten missiles for the S-200 from Ukraine (SIPRI 2016).

Missiles. Ukraine was also an important source for Iran's missile programmes. In July 1993, the Pavlohrad Chemical Factory delivered “special equipment” to Iran for \$6,928,740 in at least two instalments. This happened with the commissionaire mediation of the Russian firm Rosvooruzheniya, but the Ukrainian firm knew the country the

equipment was intended for (Federalnyi Arbitrazhnyi Sud 28.04.2000). Given the profile of the Factory, which had produced missile fuel for ballistic missiles and explosive substances for decades, the equipment sold most likely related to missile fuel. At the time, Pavlohrad Chemical Factory was probably selling its own used missile fuel, explosives, and ammunition manufacturing equipment, as this equipment had become excessive due to the conversion of defence industries and the sharp decline in military orders.

Ground Forces. There are reliable claims that Iran acquired some tanks, armoured personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles, ammunition, small arms, and spare parts for Soviet and Russian equipment from Ukraine (Volovych 2011b).

Citing circumstantial evidence, the media reported on an unspecified sale by Ukraine of "a few dozen tanks" to Iran in 1992-1994. In response, Moscow convinced Tehran to cancel its plans to buy several hundred more tanks from Ukraine by offering the same hardware with a guaranteed supply of parts and maintenance – which Ukraine apparently did not offer. Despite the added expense, the Russian offer won Tehran over, and the latter renounced dealing with Ukraine (Mycio and Efron 1994).

Given the details, it is likely that T-72s were involved: Ukraine could not have guaranteed the spare parts and consumables for these, as its tank-producing industry was specialised in other types of Soviet tanks. Moreover, it made more sense for Tehran to continue buying T-72s, already purchased in the 1980s, over adding other types to the already diversified array of tank types the Iranian armed forces already operated.

There were reports that in the early 1990s, Ukraine sold Iran 200 tanks (Mycio and Efron 1994; Izvestiya 12.05.1993). Despite Ukrainian officials' contradictory comments on the matter, the deal probably took place.

In August 1997, Ukraine signed a contract with Iran on the supply of 50 T-72 tanks of various types, along with 60 command variants of the BMP-2K infantry fighting vehicle. At some point, most probably in the late 1990s, Tehran also reached an agreement with Kyiv on supplying Iran with spare parts for S-200 radars, sights for tanks and self-propelled guns, mobile radio devices, communications intelligence, and electronic warfare equipment. The agreement remained effective until at least 2011 (Volovych 2011b).

Navy. In the early 1990s, Ukraine allegedly gave Iran eight P-270 Moskit state-of-the-art anti-ship missiles. Ukrainian government officials made several ambiguous and contradictory statements about arms sales to Iran. For example, Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Tarasiuk said in December 1993: "I can't say there are grounds for distress over

massive sales of arms to Iran. But rumors of anti-ship missiles for the Iranian navy are not true” (Mycio and Efron 1994). The transfer of Moskit missiles attracted a lot of media attention (Izvestiya 12.05.1993).

In the 1990s, Ukraine supplied Iran with navigational equipment for the navy, as well as dual-use automated complexes and means of navigation and sea traffic control produced by NII Kvant, NII Kvant-Navigatsiya, and Burevestnik, and Radar serial production plants (Tsentrazumkova 20.04.2001). These suppliers could also have provided Iran with locators as well, especially given that at least some of these firms were well-known designers and producers of locators in Soviet times (e.g., Burevestnik, Radar). The firm Radar also produced radars, as well as navigational, targeting and other electronic equipment for aircraft, including for the types of military aircraft deployed by the Iranian armed forces (like Su-24). It also produced electronic components for R-27 air-to-air missiles, also deployed by the Iranian air force.

3.6.2. Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge

Design and Development. In 1995, the Kharkiv-based Malyshev Factory demonstrated modernised specimens of T-72 and T-55/59 tanks in Iran. Reportedly, this demonstration resulted in the opening of “broad perspectives for cooperation [with Iran] on armoured vehicles.” However, the Malyshev Factory had to cancel all its deals and plans after the government of Ukraine signed the Wassenaar Agreements (Veretennikov 2012: 120).

However, this cancellation happened gradually, and even in August 2001 the general director of Malyshev Factory admitted that his firm had already completed a number of contracts with Iran and was continuing to implement the remaining contracts signed before Wassenaar Agreements had entered force (Finance.ua 2001).

According to an insider source, Ukrainian-Iranian cooperation on designing armored vehicles reached its height in the 1990s and early 2000s, and designers at the Kharkiv Morozov Machine Building Design Bureau (KMDB), or the Malyshev Factory, closely connected to the former Bureau, offered Iran a number of new products. Among them were: “a welded turret transplant on Iranian T-72 [...], a platform with placement of engine-transmission compartment [*motorno-transmissionnoe otdelenie*] with engine a 5TDF engine [*Soviet engine installed on T-64*] using the T-72 parts.” However, Ukrainians then avoided selling 5TDF engines, since it was considerably more profitable to install them on T-72s bound for export (Tarasenko 2012b).

Reportedly, Ukrainian-Iranian projects on mechanised armour also included installing a T-

80UD turret and Kharkiv-designed (and possibly produced) engine-transmission compartment on T-72 in 1998 (Tarasenko 2014). Although the descriptions of the products offered to Iran are sketchy, their focus is clear: to modernise T-72 by installing T-64 parts or T-80UD internal systems, and so forth.

The Malyshev Factory or KMDB suggested that Iran could also modernise its T-55 tanks (and the Chinese-made equivalent of the tank, Type 59) by installing a 6TD engine. Furthermore, a Ukrainian firm, most probably Malyshev Works, KMDB or some firm associated with them, developed an engine-transmission compartment based on the 5TDF for the Ra'ad-2 self-propelled howitzer. The latter design was notable for the forward position placement of its engine [*perednemotornaya komponovka*] (Tarasenko 2014). Iran claimed the Ra'ad project as its own design.

The two former designs did enter the production stage, as the tanks of these modernised types were presumably demonstrated at an Iranian military parade (e.g., Khamenei.ir 03.03.1377). Photos exist of a tank combining a T-72 bogie [*khodovaya chast'*] with a T-80UD turret, proving some production took place. Iran could probably have acquired the T-80 turrets not only from Ukraine directly but also via Pakistan, as Ukraine had a large project with Pakistan on mechanised armour, namely certain tanks (Tarasenko 2012a).

Licensed Production. In the mid-1990s, according to an official version, Iran decided to establish production of a turboprop aircraft capable of carrying 6 tons or 60 passengers with luggage for 700 km. This decision was reached with the participation of the Ministries of Roads and Transportation and Industries and Defence as well as national airlines. Later, Iran invited all relevant manufacturers to collaborate (Hamshahri 19.05.1393).

Out of the twelve participating aircraft manufacturers, including ATR, Fokker and Dash (Aeroworld 1997), Ukraine's Antonov firm won out. "Given the economic and international issues of our country, the Ukrainian An-140 has been chosen." (Hamshahri 19.05.1393).

On 3 December 1995, Iran's HESA company and Ukraine's ANTK im Antonova signed an Agreement on Joint Production, Design, Transfer of Technology and Manufacturing of An-140 Aircraft, worth \$195.2m. The plan was to produce 80 An-140 aircraft modified to meet Iranian conditions and needs with prospects for designing maritime surveillance, tactical transport, and airborne warning and control (AWACS) types in the future (RIA Novosti Ukraina 01.07.2015).

When Ukraine and Iran concluded the agreement in 1375 [*ca. 1996*], Ukraine was still

completing the design of the An-140 and producing the first specimens of An-140 (Hamshahri 19.05.1393). According to other sources, the situation was even more precarious: when the contract was concluded the An-/IRAN-140 still remained just “a sketch on paper,” although its model had been tested using object-oriented software and airflow facility (Iran International 2001b).

Iranian support contributed to the completion of Ukraine's An-140 project. “Due to some problems the foreign partner was facing, HESA paid part of the royalty in advance.” (Iran International 2002d) Apparently, the situation at the Ukrainian firm was critical: “The first advance payment was made to Ukraine in late 1996, which enabled it to perform the sampling stage.” (Iran International 2001b)

Due to many delays caused by both Ukrainian and Iranian partners, the HESA completed its first aircraft at the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (HESA) in Shahin Shahr in 1379 [2000] (Hamshahri 19.05.1393). The Ukrainian An-140 model had been adapted to local conditions and the model manufactured at the HESA factory in Isfahan was named HESA Iran-140 (ISNA 19.05.1393). Since Tehran had provided funds, the Iranian media emphasised: “our outlook was taken into consideration in the design process to manufacture a plane which met our requirements” (Iran International 2002d).

Nevertheless, work went on with numerous delays and the design was tested in the process. Indeed, Iran had risked purchasing a product of unknown quality. “The Antonov An-140 first took to the sky in 1999 and the maiden flight of Iran-140’s prototype first came in 2001, which goes to demonstrate how young the project is in both countries” (Iran International 2003b). Tehran, however, had effectively no alternative to Antonov's offer.

Overhaul and modernisation. The flight to Iran of dozens of Soviet-made Iraqi planes between 23 and 28 January 1991 resulted in Iran receiving a considerable amount of various modern military aircraft, mostly of Soviet types. Among them were: four MiG-29 fighter aircraft, seven MiG-23L fighter aircraft, four MiG-23BN, seven Su-25K close air support aircraft, 24 Su-24MK bomber, 40 Su-22 fighter bomber, four Su-20 fighter bomber, and 24 Mirage F-1 fighter aircraft (Chubin 1994: 93). According to other sources, there were 12 fighter aircraft of all MiG-23s modifications and 22 Su-24 aircraft. There were also fourteen Il-76, two of which were aircraft with airborne early warning and control systems, while others were of military Il-76TD and civilian Il-76MD types.

Tehran did not return these to Baghdad after the war between Iraq and the US-led coalition ended. The situation surrounding the aircraft remained precarious, and Baghdad repeatedly demanded their return. This is perhaps the reason that Iran waited until July 1993 to take

them formally into its possession (Taghvaei 2014: 70). Because of limited technical opportunities, the Iranian armed forces did not maintain the aircraft fully, only gradually overhauling the planes. For example, Tehran succeeded in overhauling the first Su-22 only in the early 2010s (*Ibid*: 70). Moreover, in the early 1990s and possibly later Iran was able to buy brand-new military hardware from Russia. Thus, Tehran believed that buying new Russian hardware would involve less technical trouble than overhauling the former Iraqi planes and be more financially attractive in the long run.

At any rate, even for minimal maintenance and overhauls, Iran needed spare parts and some technical expertise and training. The Ukrainian company Sarmat allegedly took over the maintenance and repairs of the former Iraqi Su-24 seized by Iran (Sychev 1996). Most probably, Ukraine was able to provide better financial terms and Kyiv had more freedom to deal with the issue. At the time, Russia remained linked to Baghdad, which would have perceived assistance to Iran in maintaining and overhauling former Iraqi planes as an unfriendly act – and hoped for new deals with Iraq after sanctions against this country were lifted.

In 1992-1998, “a Ukrainian Air Force maintenance group” worked in Iran (Taghvaei 2012: 72). It is unknown how large it was and what legal status it carried.

The results of Ukrainian assistance in bringing former Iraqi planes into service were mixed. With Ukrainian help, Iran managed to carry out necessary technical works and recommission Su-24MKs and Il-76s into the IRIAF. When Iran lacked qualified specialists to maintain and repair its Su-22s, it turned for help to the contracted Ukrainian experts, which offered to make Su-22s operational for \$10m apiece, as well as provide necessary technical information and training on maintenance of the Su-22 for Iranian technicians (Taghvaei 2014: 70).

According to Babak Taghvaei, the Iranian Air Force was unable to spend the \$100 million necessary to repair ten aircraft (Taghvaei 2014: 70). However, this seems unlikely given the huge volumes of Tehran’s defence purchases at the time. More likely, this was simply too high a price for restoring second-hand aircraft, many of which were already in bad technical condition, especially given that Tehran was harbouring hopes to get new planes from Russia. Regardless, IRIAF tried to restore the Su-22s on its own, taking many long years to succeed.

Ukrainian specialists were also involved in the maintenance of Iran's MiG-29s. Regular inspections of its RD-33 engines at the IRIAF facilities were conducted by Iranian technicians with assistance from Russian and Ukrainian specialists until the mid-1990s.

When Russia's RSK MiG renounced its obligations and refused to supply Iran with spare parts and the technical documentation needed to keep MiGs operational due to US pressure in the late 1990s, the IRIAF launched its own programme to overhaul its MiG-29s inside the country. A “Ukrainian maintenance group” contributed to the implementation of its first stage at Mehrabad in 1998 (Taghvaei 2012: 73).

3.6.3. Results

In the 1990s, especially the early 1990s, Ukraine sold Tehran a considerable number of weapons, although the prices and the total value of the deals remains mostly unknown. According to a report by Ivan Pliushch, a Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament, in May 1993 the government made a deal with Tehran to exchange Iranian oil for arms. According to another source, the deal involved a \$1.5bn barter agreement between Russia, Ukraine and Iran (Seattle Times 11.05.1993).

However, actual deliveries fell short of this goal. The volume of Ukrainian-Iranian defence-related cooperation for the entire period of 1992-2001 came to around \$40m yearly. Export of equipment, services, technologies and know-how involved many state-of-the-art products. Moreover some products and services offered by Kyiv to Tehran were the most advanced in the Soviet Union, such as the Moskit missile or tank designs from the Malyshev Tank Factory.

3.7. Relation between Iran and Ukraine in the Defence Sphere in the 2000s

3.7.1. Transfer of Hardware and Materials

Air Defence. In September 2006, there were authoritative reports that Ukraine supplied Kolchuga radars to Iran. The number of radars delivered or anticipated remains unknown, although the price has been reported at \$25m each (Karniol 2006).

Ukraine dismissed these accusations. Viktor Hvozd', the Head of Section for military technical cooperation of the Main Service of Defence Policy at the Secretariat of the President of Ukraine, commented that these deliveries could not have taken place. Moreover, he excluded the possibility of illegal deliveries, as he claimed that every Kolchuga ESM system was under strict control, especially after a scandal regarding an alleged delivery of Kolchuga to Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Hvozd' also emphasised that “sale of Kolchugas to Iran given the current hard negotiations being conducted by the world

community regarding Iran's nuclear programme is absolutely illogical [action] in light of Ukraine's course towards European integration” (UNIAN 26.09.2006).

The accusation that Ukraine sold Kolchugas to Iran revived the suspicions that Kyiv could have also sold a Kolchuga to Iraq. The US had voiced this accusation in 2002 but it remained unsubstantiated, as after the US invasion no Kolchugas were found. As the UNIAN news agency commented: “for Ukraine this case caused the biggest deterioration of relations with the US since its independence [*in 1991*]” (UNIAN 26.09.2006).

Missiles. In 2001, up to twelve Kh-55 cruise missiles were transferred by some Ukrainian entities to Iran (Warner 2005), along with later maintenance and some technical support. While the role of the Ukrainian government remains unclear, the transfer of these latest Soviet technological products seems to be one of the greatest successes among Tehran’s efforts to acquire new technologies from the former USSR.

Throughout the 2000s, Ukrainian continued to supply Iran with specialty metals, ball bearings for liquid propellant missile systems, and perhaps other materials, including those used to manufacture Scud- and Nodong-type missiles. The US government believed that these activities occurred without the full knowledge of the Ukrainian government, yet despite repeated American interventions these deals continued into the late 2000s (The Guardian 06.12.2010).

Navy. In the early 2000s, Ukraine sold Iran the remaining combat-trained marine animals it had inherited from the Soviet Navy. The animals included three Atlantic bottlenose dolphins, two walruses, a beluga whale, six sea lions, four seals and some other animals. They had previously been trained at the Soviet Sevastopol Centre for Combat Training of Marine Mammals, also known as Military Unit No. 99727 or “Site No. 75” to carry out different military tasks such as planting explosives and locating mines. The head of the research and training programme dealing with deployment of mammals for military purposes, well-known scientist Boris Zhurid, along with some of his collaborators, also went to Iran to continue their work there (Matyshenko 2011).

3.7.2. Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge

Licensed production. Around 2000 [1379-1383], the HESA faced financial difficulties and could not ensure stable production of aircraft (Hamshahri 19.05.1393). Production started with assembling kits sent from Ukraine.

In March 2001, the Ukrainian press published leaked official correspondence between the Antonov ASTC and Aeronautical Certification Society (ACS) of Iran. The ACS

complained that the An-140 did not correspond to the contract, and that Antonov “has not provided documents that would give a detailed idea of the plane ... what it was in the contract, and about what it actually is.” The ACS also warned that it would not approve the first three aircraft An-140 in the HESA, because they “do not meet the requirements of Iran and cannot be used in all areas of the country. This primarily relates to non-compliance with requirements concerning the altitude of flight with one failed engine.” Moreover, the agency concluded: “Iran has not received the plane it was promised, and the ACS cannot take the risk and allow to transport people on them [An-140]. It can be used to transport other cargo.” (Kompanion 2003).

By the late 2000s, according to official statements the share of Iranian-manufactured details in the aircraft was “growing remarkably,” yet by the end of 2008 Iranian factories had only produced nine aircraft (Preyger 2009: 10). This was still a major achievement for Antonov as it was then able to produce only three An-140 in Ukraine and three in Russia. In November 2010 an Iranian official announced that in total 14 planes were manufactured (IRNA 10.11.2010) although other sources claimed that by 2015 the total number of Iran-140s manufactured (or more probably assembled) in Iran was not more than ten (Vzlyot 2015: 43). Still, very few An-140 aircraft had been ordered within and outside Iran by 2015.

According to an ISNA report, by establishing production of An-140s, Iran also planned to acquire a domestically-manufactured aircraft which would take over the functions of sea patrolling, previously performed by the P-3 Orion. Iran claimed to have succeeded in modifying a non-military type of Iran-140 for defence tasks: “Nowadays, this aircraft is used for both military and non-military aims in Iran and other countries.” (ISNA 19.05.1393)

In 2014, Anthony H. Cordesman also mentioned that “Iran claims to have created electronic warfare aircraft by upgrading Ukrainian Antonov An-140s” and cast doubt upon its success (Cordesman 2014: 45). It is unclear whether he was referring to an explicit claim or merely extrapolating from Iran's claims on modifying An-140s for maritime surveillance. After all, the Lockheed P-3 Orion, which Iran intended to replace with a respective military modification of Iran-140, has a signals reconnaissance version, Lockheed EP-3.

Alongside the An-140 project, Tehran and Kyiv tried to launch a second similar project involving the An-148. In October 2008, Ukraine and Iran signed a memorandum on An-148 aircraft, announcing Iran's intent to purchase and manufacture 50 aircraft of this type

in cooperation with Ukrainian and Russian firms. The Memorandum contains a norm on Iran getting new modifications of An-148. Ukrainian specialists also reported on HESA's interest in “possible military modifications of An-140 and An-148, and especially on the import of aircraft-building technologies” (Preyger 2009: 12).

On 31 October 2008, Ukraine and Iran signed a Memorandum concerning An-148 aircraft. It formalised Iran's intent to purchase and manufacture 50 aircraft of the model in cooperation with Ukrainian and Russian enterprises. Iran also insisted on the inclusion of a norm allowing Iran to acquire new modifications of An-148 for the needs of its air carriers. Preyger underlines, “The stubborn interest of the Iranian company HESA, subordinate to Iran's Defence Ministry, in possible military modifications of An-140 and An-148, and especially in import of aircraft-building technologies is remarkable.” Ukraine also competed with Russian aircraft-building firms, which struggled to sell Iran Tu-204 and offered to establish a production line of the aeroplanes in Iran (Preyger 2009: 12).

Training. At least in the late 2000s, and maybe also in earlier years, Iran invited former Soviet scientists to come to Iran to teach. Thus, for a number of years and at least until early 2009, Iran's Malek-Ashtar University of Technology invited international scientists, including Ukrainians, to teach in Iran. Malek-Ashtar University of Technology is affiliated with Iran's Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics (The Guardian 06.12.2010).

3.7.3. Results

The average annual volume of defence-related cooperation between Ukraine and Iran in 2002-2009 came to \$30m. The technological level of the equipment involved may have sometimes been high, but was generally lower than in the previous decade.

Regardless of the specifics and legality of transfers of Kh-55 missiles and An-140 aircraft, they illustrate Ukrainian-Iranian cooperation at the time. This cooperation initially appears to have widened Iran's defence capacities and improved its technology. However, closer scrutiny proves that transfers of high-tech hardware and designs often hardly led to material results as the receiving country lacked a corresponding technological base. Iran had no platform on which to install the Kh-55, and it also lacked a technological base to establish stable production of the aircraft.

3.8. Relations between Iran and Ukraine in the Defence Sphere in the 2010s

3.8.1. Hardware and Materials

Air Force. In April 2015, representatives of Antonov ASTC announced that Ukraine might supply Iran with a military transport aircraft based on the An-70. After replacing its Russian-made details with Ukrainian and foreign-made ones (e.g., replacing the joint Russian-Ukrainian produced engine with a French one) the aircraft was called An-188 (Telmanov 2015).

Ground Forces. The heavy-duty off-road truck models KrAZ-6322 and KrAZ-5233 were exported to Iran from Ukraine. Some agreement on supplying them was reached in 2007. At the same time, Ukraine and Iran discussed establishing KrAZ assembly production in Iran, and Ukrainian KrAZ trucks have appeared at different public Iranian military shows since the spring of 2011 (Lyamin 2013).

Although the media paid scant attention to these developments, some indications that this deal was implemented nevertheless appeared. In January 2009, Ihor Fomenko, KrAZ's Director for Foreign Economic Ties and Sales announced: "Last year we carried out the first deliveries of Ukrainian trucks to new regions: Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Cuba. These are countries where in the last 10 and maybe even 15 years we had not sold any KrAZ trucks" (Ukrinform 10.01.2008). These deliveries coincided with an overall rise in KrAZ sales, especially to Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (RBK-Ukraina 2008).

Some information was published in 2013 on Iran negotiating with Ukraine on buying more KrAZ trucks directly from the Ukrainian army after overhaul (Lyamin 2013). In March 2013, several brand-new apparently military-modification KrAZ trucks from Ukraine (still with Ukrainian plaques) were observed near Iran's Maragheh (4x4iran 1391).

In July 2011 Akbar Ghassemi Aliabadi, the Iranian ambassador to Kyiv, and Alireza Zaker Esfahani, governor of Isfahan Province, travelled to Kharkiv to meet the head of Kharkiv Oblast State Administration Mykhailo Dobkin. Dobkin emphasised Kharkiv Region's interest in cooperation with Iran. He singled out Kharkiv State Aviation Production Enterprise (i.e., Antonov ASTC), State Enterprise Elektrovazhmash, VAT Turboatom, State Enterprise Zavod im. Malysheva (producing tanks and other armoured vehicles) and VAT Kharkiv Traktor Works (Kharkivska oblasna... 2011) as firms particularly interested in cooperation. Such contacts illustrate the willingness to work with Tehran on defence-

related issues that persisted on a regional level despite the international crisis over Iran's nuclear programme and the US and their allies' objections to cooperation with Tehran.

3.8.2. Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge

Licensed production. In May 2015, former Deputy Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine Oleksander Kava reported that manufacture of An-140s in Isfahan had been halted five years ago (Kava 2015). However, in early June 2015, a delegation consisting of 11 representatives of the Iranian aircraft industry visited Ukraine (Youtube 15.06.2015).

3.8.3. Results

The average annual volume of defence-related cooperation between Ukraine and Iran in 2010-2014 came to less than \$10m. No high-technology products and no advanced technologies were involved in cooperation during this period, an especially large setback for joint projects with Ukraine's Antonov firm. Despite the statements of some regional authorities in Ukraine, defence-related interactions with Iran had effectively stopped by the mid-2010, most probably by the end of 2014.

3.9. Relation between Iran and Belarus in the Defence Sphere in the 1990s - 2010s

3.9.1. Hardware and Materials

Air Defence. In 2006, Russia was accused of providing S-300PSs to Belarus in order to re-transfer them to Iran, yet this story turned out to be false (Poroskov 2007).

In 2007, a Belarusian journalist writing on military matters guessed that Belarus could modernise and sell the S-125s (in total 64 launchers) it had decommissioned in 2006 to Iran (Kashin 2007). However, no signs of such a deal or even of negotiations on such a deal ever materialised. The subsequent sale to Iran by Russia of Tor SAM systems and the deal on S-300 SAM systems would have removed the offer of S-125 from the agenda.

The international media, especially Israeli, frequently speculated about the transfer of S-300 systems to Iran. Thus, in 2008 and 2009, the *Jerusalem Post* accused Belarus of selling these arms to Iran (Nasha Niva 9.8.2010), and in August 2010 the *Associated Press* news agency reinterpreted an ambiguous report from the Iranian *FARS* news agency about Iran receiving S-300 from Belarus. Iran allegedly “obtained two missiles from Belarus and two others from another unspecified source” (Haaretz 04.08.2010). However, the S-300 cannot

be reduced to missiles. For instance, one unit of its S-300PT modification consists of a surveillance radar, a fire control system and launch vehicles. Usually a low altitude detection radar is also included in the unit.

In the late 2000s or early 2010s, Iran also purchased the modern radar Vostok-E from Belarus. On 30 April 2009, Piotr Rogozhevsky, then First Deputy Chairman of Belarus's State Military Industrial Committee, told the media that one Vostok-E had already been delivered to an unspecified foreign customer (Alesin 2013). This was apparently the first export of Vostok-E; taking into account all the facts and context, with high probability this unspecified country was Iran. More evidence of Iran possessing the Vostok-E emerged in February 2013 in a film broadcast by Iranian national TV (Youtube 06.02.2013). The film dealt with the events of 2012, meaning the transfer took place most probably in 2010 or earlier. There is no information on how many Vostok-E Tehran purchased.

Ground Forces. Defence-related cooperation between Iran and Belarus started with minor supplies of parts and components for tanks and armoured vehicles. The Belarusian 140th Repairs Plant began selling to Iran in 1995-1996, and two leaked contracts exist from the period. According to the contract 021/V/2885 of 28.08.95, concluded by the 140th Repairs Plant, Iran should have received six V-46-6 engines (for T-72), seven 2A46-2 125mm guns, twelve gearboxes of T-72, six reduction gears [*reduktory*] and six gear trains [*gitary*] of T-72. However, this delivery was halted and sent back by Russian customs. Therefore, it is not clear whether the delivery ever reached Iran.

According to the second contract 024/V/2885 of 18.03.96, concluded by the same vendor, Iran bought 30 launchers for 9P-135M anti-tank guided rockets (Feduta 2005: 410). This contract was fulfilled. The launchers are compatible with the missiles 9M111M, 9M113 and 9M113M, being part of wire-guided anti-tank missile systems Faktoriya, Konkurs and Konkurs-M (Raketnaya tekhnika 2011). The Konkurs systems are installed on BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles, which Iran then possessed in large quantities.

As early as February 1997, in connection with the Belarusian President's forthcoming visit to Iran, some media sources reported on a secret agreement concluded between Belarus and Iran on sales of military equipment and spare parts for tanks and armoured vehicles. Referring to unspecified CIA sources, they pointed out that Belarus was probably becoming “a conduit for Russian missile and nuclear weapons technology to Iran” (Gertz 1998).

According to other sources, an agreement on selling Iran tank engines and spares was drafted prior to Lukashenka's 1997 visit. This sale was to signify the beginning of larger-

scale cooperation on mechanised armour. Belarus was supposedly going to assist in the construction of an armoured vehicle repair plant in Iran, as well as provide Iran with technologies necessary for maintenance, repairs and modernisation of armoured vehicles, including the tank models T-55, T-62 and T-72 (Alesin 2007).

In the early 2000s, Belarus did indeed declare that it sold 37 T-72M1 tanks to Iran. In 2000 Minsk sold eight tanks (UN Register 2000), in 2001 14 tanks (UN Register 2001) and in 2002 15 tank (UN Register 2002).

3.9.2. Services, Transfer of Technologies and Knowledge

Design and Development. In 2007, the Belarusian military analyst Aleksandr Alesin reported on Iran's interest in getting help from Belarusian specialists to construct an automated system of air defence (Kashin 2007). Iran possessed extremely varied air defence equipment in terms of sophistication, manufacturer and technical peculiarities. It thus needed to integrate them for reasons of efficiency. Belarus had provided similar services to Venezuela in the early 2010s: its specialists designed and constructed a national air defence system for the country with Russian and Chinese participation.

In 2008, Belarus and Iran discussed possible cooperation in the telecommunications sphere with possible military applications further down the road. Thus, Iran's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Mohammad Soleimani, visited not only the National Academy of Sciences (in particular the Integrated Institute of Computer Science), but also Belarus's State Military-Industrial Committee and Svyazinformservice Research Centre (FARS 23.10.2008).

Training. In May 2010 the Iranian Defence Ministry's Malek-e Ashtar University and an unspecified Belarusian training institute – most probably the Military Academy – agreed to organise a joint PhD course in the field of command-and-control. Iran's Deputy Minister of Sciences, Research, and Technology for Research, Mohammad Mehdinejad, informed the press about this plan at a news conference following a meeting between Iranian and Belarusian science ministry officials in Tehran: “This meeting followed the two countries' earlier talks, during which we endorsed a number of cooperation protocols in different fields.” According to him, Tehran and Minsk also discussed other areas of cooperation, some of which could have a military application, such as computational calculations, super computers, physics, thermodynamics and nanotechnology (FARS 24.05.2010).

Overhaul and Modernisation. In the late 2000s, Belarusian and Chinese specialists were involved in service-life extension and modernisation of Iranian MiG-29s after Russia once

again refused to provide Iran with parts and services for its air force.

Moreover, according to unconfirmed information, a Belarusian repair plant – most probably the 558th Works in Baranavichy – reached an agreement with the IACI on a modernisation package for the Iranian MiG-29s as well as a service-life extension to be done in Iran. This package involved air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons modernisation to make the jets capable of deploying new R-27ER missiles, TV- and laser-guided bombs, and installation of a fixed in-flight refuelling probe. This project reportedly started with the MiG-29A at IACI in 2010 (Taghvaei 2012: 73). There was indirect confirmation of this in 2016 when a map of international activities of the 558th Works was leaked. It specified the countries where the firm worked, specifically mentioning Iran. However, it contained no further details on the projects done there (TUT.by 29.06.2016).

After Iranian officials reported in 2011 on the successful modernisation of their S-200s, some experts argued that this modernisation was accomplished with the help of experts from the (F)SU. OAO Tetraedr was singled out as one of the most likely candidates as in 2003 it had modernised the S-200s of the Belarusian army (Alesin 2012).

3.9.3. Results

The first known instances of Belarus providing Iran with defence-related equipment and services come in the mid-1990s, when Belarus sold spare parts for military hardware to Iran. There are no signs that Moscow was involved nor any evidence of secret business on a large scale.

The defence-related interactions between Belarus and Iran remained stable but limited starting in the mid-1990s up until ca. 2011. The average annual volumes of cooperation can be assessed at less than \$5m in 1995-1999, about \$10m in 2000-2009 and less than \$5m in 2010-2015. In the late 2000s, Minsk moved from selling hardware to offering training and technology exchange.

The technological level of cooperation remained low, the only exception being a transfer of radars in the early 2010s. However, this hardly counted as a major deal. Since 2011, Belarus has kept its relations with Iran at a minimum, choosing instead to focus its foreign policies in the Middle East on Arab regimes opposing Iran (defence cooperation with the UAE, Qatar and their allies).

3.10. Conclusions

It is possible to delineate relatively clear periods in defence-related cooperation between

Iran and (F)SU nations. Each of these periods is characterised by its own dynamic. The existence of identifiable and unique periods provides a basis for analysing the factors influencing defence-related cooperation.

When it turned to Moscow in the late 1980s for military equipment, technologies, training and other defence-related products and services, Iran was not breaking with the past. Instead, Tehran was continuing the cooperation which started (more or less along the same lines) before the 1979 revolution. Cooperation was disrupted but not wholly stopped by Iran's regime change. Thus, defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations after 1989 is characterised by continuity and further development of a long history of defence-related contacts and cooperation between Iran and the Soviet Union.

The general picture of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations after 1989 indicates that this cooperation occurred on a bilateral basis. Each of the post-Soviet nations under consideration conducted its own business with Iran. There is no evidence of other schemes, in particular transfers undertaken or services provided using another country as a channel, undermining the numerous speculations in the international media and various analytical publications of a possible transfer of equipment from Russia to Iran via Belarus.

This stands in stark contrast to the situation before 1989, when Iran did indeed receive Soviet weapons with probable Soviet authorisation from Soviet allies. It is likely that after 1989 some weapons exported by (F)SU countries to other destinations eventually reached Iran, and certain transfers to countries such as Syria and Sudan might have included some equipment which ended up in Iran. However there is no evidence that any major transfers occurred.

Working with post-Soviet nations, Iran received the bulk of its defence-related transfers and services from Russia. Ukraine also provided Iran with some important equipment, technologies, know-how and services, but it lagged far behind Russia in that regard. Belarus achieved considerably less even compared with Ukraine. Attempts to acquire defence-related equipment, services, technologies and know-how from other post-Soviet countries were even less important for Tehran.

The periods, dynamics and essential traits of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations are presented in the three tables below (*see Tables 2, 3 and 4*). To identify the periods and describe them, several more explicit indicators have been chosen. These include volume of effective deliveries, estimated quantity of new deals, share of top-of-the-line equipment and capacity-expanding components in deliveries, and new deals.

In order to better reflect the dynamics of cooperation, the tables include the average volume of effective deliveries per year. This makes sense for the three following reasons. First, the thesis deals with the phenomenon of defence-related cooperation, which includes a host of various interactions which may or may not lead to deliveries of equipment or provision of services. This forces us to link deliveries to the interactions which preceded them (negotiations, conclusion of a contract, etc.) without which the delivery would not have occurred. One possible way to group them and present these interactions in a concise, although imperfect, manner is to identify major periods and use the total volume of deliveries to calculate average annual figures.

Secondly, the precise volumes of deliveries for each year are not known, and it is considerably easier to assess these volumes for a longer period than for every individual year. This is the case because of the secretive nature of the government agencies dealing with these issues; many transfers can only be attributed to a broader period as the precise time of their occurrence is unknown. Thirdly, many deals involved transfers of equipment or provision of services over longer time periods, and it makes no sense to break them down by year. For example, transfers of a major arms system such as SAM could last several years, and the system becomes operational and increases the defence capacities of a customer only after the whole transaction is complete.

Table 2. Dynamics of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and the Soviet Union/Russian Federation.

Time Span	Volume of Effective Deliveries of Hardware and Materials to Iran, Average Annual Volume for the Period, \$ Millions, Approximately	New Deals	Share of Strategic and Top-of-the-Line Equipment and Technologies in Deliveries to Iran	Services Provided to Iran
1989-1991	370	Many (including on top-of-the-line equipment and technologies, i.e., aircraft, submarines, armoured vehicles, navy land-based facilities)	Very high (air defence land-based equipment, aircraft)	Wide range of services: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. short- and long-term defence-related training; 2. design and development support; 3. engineering services; 4. sale of licenses; 5. assistance in establishing

				productions lines; 6. equipment maintenance)
1992-1997	500	Many (including on top-of-the-line equipment and technologies, i.e., aircraft, armoured vehicles, missiles)	Very high (aircraft, submarines, armoured vehicles)	Wide range of services: 1. short- and long-term defence-related training; 2. design and development support; 3. engineering services; 4. sale of licenses; 5. assistance in establishing productions lines; 6. equipment maintenance)
1998-1999	300	Limited number	Very high (aircraft, submarines, armoured vehicles)	Wide range of services: 1. short- and long-term defence-related training; 2. design and development support; 3. engineering services; 4. sale of licenses; 5. assistance in establishing productions lines; 6. equipment maintenance
2000-2007	250	Few (on helicopters, some aircraft)	Some (air defence land-based equipment, aircraft)	Narrow range of services: 1. short-term defence-related training; 2. assistance in establishing productions lines; 3. equipment maintenance and overhaul
2008-2010	150	Few (on air defence land-based equipment)	Limited	Narrow range of services: 1. short-term

				defence-related training; 2. equipment maintenance and overhaul
2011-2013	Less than 100	No major contracts	N/A	Very few: 1. equipment maintenance and overhaul
2014-2015	300	Few (on SAM systems)	Limited	Very few: 1. equipment maintenance and overhaul

Note. Compiled from own calculations and assessment based on sources quoted in this Chapter. All volumes are in current prices.

Table 3. Dynamics of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and Ukraine.

Time Span	Volume of Effective Deliveries of Hardware and Materials to Iran, Average Annual Volume for the Period, \$ Millions, Approximately	New Deals	Share of Strategic and Top-of-the-Line Equipment and Technologies in Deliveries to Iran	Services Provided to Iran
1992-2001	40	Many (including on top-of-the-line equipment and technologies, i.e., aircraft, armoured vehicles)	Very high (air defence land-based equipment, aircraft, armoured vehicles, missiles)	Wide range of services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short- and long-term defence-related training; • design and development support; • sale of licenses; • assistance in establishing productions lines; • equipment maintenance
2002-2009	30	Few	High (aircraft, missiles)	Wide range of services: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. short- and long-term defence-related training; 2. sale of licenses; 3. assistance in establishing productions lines; 4. equipment

				maintenance
2010-2014	Less than 10	Very few	High (aircraft, missiles)	Limited range of services: 1. equipment maintenance

Note. Compiled from own calculations and assessment based on sources quoted in this Chapter. All volumes are in current prices.

Table 4. Dynamics of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and Belarus.

Time Span	Volume of Effective Deliveries of Hardware and Materials to Iran, Average Annual Volume for the Period, \$ Millions, Approximately	New Deals	Share of Strategic and Top-of-the-Line Equipment and Technologies in Deliveries to Iran	Services Provided to Iran
1995-1999	Less than 5	Many (including on top-of-the-line equipment and technologies, i.e., aircraft, submarines, armoured vehicles, navy land-based facilities)	Low	1. equipment maintenance, overhaul and modernisation
2000-2009	10	Few	Low	1. equipment maintenance, overhaul and modernisation
2010-2015	Less than 5	None	Low	1. equipment maintenance, overhaul and modernisation

Note. Compiled from own calculations and assessment based on sources quoted in this Chapter. All volumes are in current prices.

4. Domestic Structural Factors in Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Nations

This Chapter examines several fundamental domestic factors which shaped defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. It focuses on socio-economic circumstances and the role defence industries play within states. The first part of the Chapter investigates the situation inside (F)SU countries, while the second part deals with Iran.

Structural realism emphasises the key role of system-level factors in international relations. However, this position does not negate the role of domestic factors. Factors within countries generate the initial need for a polity to engage in external interactions: they drive states to enter into international relations. By this logic, this Chapter first analyses the situation in the collapsing Soviet Union and post-Soviet republics which drove those states to search for foreign partners to solve acute socio-economic problems.

This closely correlated with their quest for security. In those years, threats to statehood, independence and territorial integrity stemmed partly or even mostly from bad economic conditions in the (F)SU nations. This in turn increased social and political instability, which caused governments in the area to prioritise – whether consciously or not – socio-economic issues, including in terms of national security. The defence industries, which were desperate for foreign deals to an even greater extent than other branches of (post-)Soviet industry, comprised a significant sector of the economies of these countries.

Given the high degree of economic importance of (post-)Soviet defence industries and their need for new partnerships and deals abroad, it is necessary to clarify their clout in forming foreign policy of their countries. Presumably, when they were not able to influence government decisions directly, they were sometimes able to circumvent restrictions in order to survive in the dire socio-economic conditions of the time. This was also the case for major deals with Iran.

After considering the socio-economic conditions which generated interest in working with Iran, this dissertation will illustrate how governments repeatedly ignored the interests of defence industries in deals with Iran. Having established this historical context, the thesis will analyse how deals with foreign customers in the defence sphere were regulated. It will show how many opportunities Iran had to acquire defence-related equipment and services from various sources, and which of these were beyond the pale of various government

regulations. In the legal uncertainty of the late 1980s and early 1990s, even formally state-owned enterprises in (post-)Soviet states were able to act independently from governments and even against official policy, especially when they did not reflect the interests of the defence industries.

This study emphasises that in the period under consideration, (post-)Soviet defence industries needed more foreign deals than they could find, and their governments partly contributed to this predicament. For most of the period under consideration, there were numerous opportunities for deals with Iran outside formal, government-controlled channels, including even illegal and rogue transfers. Thus, the concluding portion of the section dealing with (F)SU nations considers whether potential opportunities for defence-related deals outside government control were taken advantage of: whether they became for Tehran an alternative to procuring defence-related equipment and services via government-controlled channels.

The second part of this Chapter analyses the situation in Iran. However, it is first necessary to address two basic issues. First, it is necessary to determine whether changes in the dynamics of cooperation were related to the funds Tehran had at its disposal at any given time: given the attention the Iranian government paid to repelling possible external threats, it is assumed that Tehran would be willing to allocate funds for defence purposes despite changes in the country's economic situation. Hence, the study analyses the defence budget rather than other possible indicators of the general economic situation in Iran (such as budget revenues, oil price, etc.).

After investigating the financial premises of Iran's defence-related cooperation with (F)SU nations, it is necessary to review the development of Iran's defence industry (R&D, production, maintenance, overhaul). The Iranian state, both before and after the 1979 Revolution, was constantly striving to develop domestic defence industries, and after 1979 the country even announced its aim to attain self-sufficiency. That would have diminished Iran's need to procure military equipment and services from abroad. Hence, if this study establishes that in the period under consideration Tehran failed to significantly develop its defence industries, it would mean that the factor of domestic defence capacity effectively did not change, and Tehran needed foreign help as much at the end of the period as it did at the beginning.

4.1. Economic Incentives for (F)SU Nations to Cooperate with Iran

Before 1989, the Soviet government sold weapons to Iran at least partially because of the

financial attractiveness of the trade: Tehran paid for the weapons or exchanged them for the commodities the USSR needed, notably natural gas for the Transcaucasian republics. This stands in stark contrast to the Soviet Union's usual practice in the region, and developing world in general. For political or ideological reasons, the Soviet Union exported huge numbers of weapons to certain developing countries which effectively did not pay for them.

This is particularly true of Iraq, which was the largest customer of Soviet products in the 1980s, accumulating a debt which on 1 December 1996 came to \$7.8bn – including \$7,238m for arms (Avsharov 2012: 225). The Syrian debt to the Soviet Union – also related to arms purchases – comprised \$10bn. By the end of the Soviet era, according to perhaps slightly exaggerated estimates, the loans extended by Moscow to mostly developing countries accounted for more than 40 percent of the \$146bn debt to the Soviet Union and later Russia (New York Times 03.02.1993). Russia later forgave large parts of these debts.

In the 1990s, and – to a lesser degree – in later periods, the (F)SU nations faced dire threats to their statehood from within their territories due to the deteriorating socio-economic situation. Defence industries were likewise severely affected. Thus, the Soviet government in late 1980s strived to reform its huge defence industries by making them manufacture non-military goods and seeking new markets for Soviet arms. These efforts failed on many accounts, making the firms even more eager to do business with any customer they could find.

Officials and experts involved with these transactions cited economic motives as the main driver of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations (New York Times 03.02.1993). Indeed, Moscow later stopped selling arms on credit to any country. In November 1992, Petr Aven, Russia's Minister of Foreign Economic Relations emphasised that Russia had already reoriented its arms export towards more solvent nations of the Third World. Russia also intended to “actively seek new markets for arms sales and extend its presence in traditional markets, meanwhile demanding that supplies be paid for in hard currency” (Kommersant 01.12.1992). Though this may have been a wise move for the country as a whole, it was bad news for the defence industries: they were used to receiving money from their own government even when recipient foreign customers failed to pay up.

On the whole, even well-established institutions in the former Soviet Union struggled to survive in the 1990s. A leading Russian jet engines expert from the Moscow Aviation Institute described the situation in the 1990s thus: “Everything collapsed. Our only hope

was abroad. Iran, Pakistan, Guinea. Any country that was interested.” As a consequence, leading Russian experts on missile and aircraft technologies travelled to Iran to give lectures with fees as low as \$50-100 (Dobbs 2002).

Government spending on national armed forces effectively stopped for several years. It was only in 2003 that Russian President Putin proclaimed in his annual message to the Federal Assembly that he planned on a “substantial re-arming” [*sushchestvennoye perevooruzhenie*] of Russia's military as one of three key aims of military reform. That theoretically meant many new orders for Russian defence industries.

However, the ambitious State Programme of Arms Development for the period of 2007-2015, which included plans for arms purchases and development of new weapons, was adopted only three years later. The programme stipulated that the Russian government would spend almost RUR 5 trillion. However, it “effectively failed” (Kommersant 25.02.2011), and in 2011 the Kremlin replaced it with another document. The new programme for the period of 2011-2020 increased funding almost fourfold (to RUR 19 trillion, i.e. \$633,333m) and brought many orders for Russian defence industries and related foreign – above all post-Soviet – firms.

In Ukraine and Belarus, serious purchases for the national army from domestic national defence industries began only in ca. 2014 and 2012-3, respectively. This was the case not only for advanced equipment but even for ammunition. Thus, in post-Soviet times, Luhansk Cartridge Works, despite being the only manufacturer of ammunition for small arms in Ukraine, had no sales in the country at all before the beginning of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. It exported its entire output (Lb.ua 06.10.2016).

Meanwhile, the defence industries of all three countries struggled to keep even traditional markets and partners (like India, Vietnam, some Arab states, former Soviet republics) let alone find new ones. Even several celebrated deals were dubious in business terms: the sale of Russian aircraft to Malaysia involved payments in palm oil. Interest in post-Soviet defence industries in Iran persisted throughout the period under consideration. The arms industries' situation certainly improved – first thanks to general economic improvement and later thanks to a resumption in state orders. Nevertheless, it remained considerably worse than in Soviet times.

The Iranian market and Iranian partners were particularly important in this context as other options were not forthcoming. This became evident after the post-Soviet defence industries failed to get access to Western markets and markets traditionally dominated by Western arms firms.

Although trade between Iran and (F)SU nations in defence-related goods and services did not make up a major part of the foreign trade of these countries, the trade was not without value for them. First, Iran and (F)SU nations had limited success in trading in other commodities. Iran and Russia remained essentially energy-exporting nations and hence had little to offer each other. Thus, arms were one commodity which interested Tehran and which (F)SU nations really could deliver.

Second, all three countries considered in this thesis maintained a constant positive trade balance with Iran. This was especially important for Ukraine and Belarus, which needed to compensate for considerable foreign trade deficits with other countries.

Third, certain projects could have been lucrative. In the period under consideration, Ukraine and Belarus never granted other countries large loans, nor did they provide generous conditions for defence-related cooperation. This limited the range of possible projects with non-Western countries to those with straightforward payment and funding schemes (although they may have included more sophisticated schemes for projects funded by third countries: the Belarusian government tried to use financing from Saudi Arabia to finance sales of trucks to African countries as early as the early 2000s).

Meanwhile, Russia in many cases continued to resort to the old Soviet practice in financing trade deals and cooperation projects – both military and civilian – in its relations with certain non-Western countries. That is, it relied on credit or long-term payment schemes. However, it too modified its approach when compared to Soviet practice. As a former Minister of External Economic Relations Aven commented in 1994:

“It is [the earned] money and not tons [of deliveries] that matter. We really had and have stable, even growing foreign exchange earnings from arms trade. [...] Except for one or two of the best years in the early 1980s, we remain now on the markets just as we were present on them [before that] [...] We did not leave the markets where we could sell, we left the countries to which we were giving expensive gifts for many years at the expense of the national treasury. If you believe that halting exports to, say, Cuba or North Korea means loss of markets, for me it means the normalisation of foreign trade. [...] It is factories who are panicking. In the past, the state paid factories from the budget and supplied arms to various countries free of charge.” (Kommersant Vlast' 11.10.1994)

This radical approach, basically “no money – no supplies,” was later moderated, when Russia started raking in huge profits from oil and gas trade beginning in the early 2000s. It was resultantly more amenable to projects and sales to foreign nations which did not involve direct or immediate payments. However, this was not true of Russian-Iranian

cooperation, including in defence-related areas.

Russia avoided this type of scheme as much as possible with Iran. In dealing with Tehran, Moscow adamantly demanded the most rapid possible settlements and did not hesitate to halt deliveries even for relatively small Iranian debts. On one hand, from 1989-1992 US officials asserted that the Soviet and Russian governments were selling aircraft and tanks to Tehran at large discounts. On the other, Moscow wanted cash from Iran (Chicago Tribune 19.01.1992). Such conditions – demands for cash without any credit loans schemes – were reported for a deal on the sale of three submarines and training for their crew (Seay 1992).

Likewise, throughout the period under consideration here Moscow never allowed barter schemes in trade with Iran, despite the fact that these schemes were proposed by high-ranking officials of both countries many times, especially after international sanctions against Iran cut the country off from the global financial system. Even the idea of trade in national currencies was anathema until the end of the period under consideration.

Moscow's constant policy was to make Iran pay in hard currency.

As a result, Iran never accumulated huge debts from buying Russian arms on credit. Such problems emerged in Russia's relations with numerous other developing countries, including Iran's close ally, Syria.

The Russian government and Russian firms might have acted in this way as they were aware of the risks involved in dealing with a country considered an opponent of the US and the West in general. This meant that any business with Tehran was on shaky ground.

Meanwhile, Moscow also felt that Iran had money to pay; this Russian policy can also be considered a continuation of the Soviet approach to relations with Iran, which were also far less burdened by debts – and if they were, then not by Iran's debts to the USSR but by Soviet debts to Iran – than Soviet relations with other Middle Eastern countries. These tactics limited the number of projects and directions of cooperation, but they also ensured higher profits from cooperation with Iran.

This was the case even for civilian projects. Although in its early stages Iran allegedly paid for the construction of the Bushehr NPP partially in goods (Novaya gazeta 09.03.2006), the project was profitable for Russia in the end. The director of the Moscow-based Centre for Energy and Security Studies, Anton Khlopkov, in commenting on plans to expand the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant by constructing further reactors, conceded: “this is arguably the only nuclear power plant construction project in the portfolio of the Russian nuclear industry which will be implemented fully at the expense of the customer, without attracting

Russian financing in the form of a state credit loan” (Mid.ru. 20.08.2015).

There is circumstantial evidence that this approach was applied to defence-related cooperation as well. For instance, in the 1980s – 1990s India bought ten project 877EKM submarines from the Soviet Union and Russia. These were of the same type as the three submarines that Iran purchased from Moscow at the same time. However, because Moscow and New Delhi used Russian roubles and Indian rupees in their bilateral relations, India effectively paid just \$20m for a submarine, while Iran paid, according to various estimates, 10-20 times more (Nezavisimaya gazeta 01.07.2016).

As a person involved in implementing Russia's contract with Iran on the S-300 SAM system later recalled in an informal communication:

“A few years ago (probably in 2008) Iran paid a small down payment of \$160m. Our production lines, according to the contract, prepared the corresponding number of S-300, while Iranian military personnel were trained by us to work with the S-300. But after that a standstill followed. The Iranians did not want to pay the remaining amount and continued endless discussions about lowering the price and delivery of S-300s without [prior] payment, and our [superiors], in accordance with the signed contract, insisted that “[you pay us] money in the morning – [you get] chairs in the evening.”⁴ When it finally became clear that the Iranians wanted to prevail over Russia in this issue as a matter of principle, and there was no hope for [prior] pay, [Russians] threw up their hands and used a convenient occasion to cancel the contract.” (Voyna i mir 05.08.2011)

This indicates that Moscow applied a strict approach towards Iran's military purchases, i.e., to deliver only on condition of prior or immediate payment for goods or services in question. This approach apparently remained consistent throughout the entire period under consideration. Thus in, August 2016, Russia also halted the delivery of two remaining batteries [*divizionna*] of S-300 SAM systems because Tehran failed to pay (Kommersant 09.08.2016). At the same time, Moscow was aware that due to numerous sanctions, Tehran was cut off from the world banking system and encountered objective difficulties with payments. This resulted in the need to find some other payment mechanism, and Moscow used its first opportunity to once again delay its delivery of S-300.

4.2. The Leverage of Defence Industries in Cooperation with Iran

Another question thus arises: how much were defence industries able to influence the policies of their respective governments? In other words, were they able to shape

⁴ A famous phrase from the Soviet satirical film “The Twelve Chairs.”

government policy so that defence enterprises could sell abroad? To answer this question, this section shall first analyse the role of defence industries in general and then several major firms in government decision-making. This analysis shall be complemented by descriptions of known cases when defence industry-related actors were able to influence cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations.

The idea that defence industries can be drivers for foreign policy is quite common in political science and analysis. For Russia in this period, this topic has been discussed, *inter alia*, by Robert O. Freedman. He identifies the following eight key actors who controlled the foreign policy-making process in Russian foreign policy:

- The President and his office;
- The Foreign Ministry;
- Energy conglomerates close to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin;
- Russian banking interests;
- The Defence Ministry;
- The Atomic Energy Ministry;
- The Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations;
- *Rosvooruzheniye*, the state-owned arms-exporting company. (Freedman 1998: 145)

At least three of these – the Defence Ministry, Atomic Energy Ministry and *Rosvooruzhenie*, may have had specific vested interests in increased cooperation with Iran and could have directly or indirectly facilitated cooperation with the country in the hope of surviving economically in conditions of limited access to other markets through work in Iran (Freedman 1998: 147).

Defence industries remained largely under the control of their governments and could pursue their particular interests against the policies of the government only in the exceptional conditions of weakening government or in the form of isolated deals that could be stopped anytime by their respective government agencies. These circumstances precluded major transfers of relatively sophisticated technologies, as these required time and stable conditions.

Three cases illustrate the failure of even influential Russian and Ukrainian defence firms⁵ to persuade their respective countries of the necessity of cooperating with Iran. These are the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum along with the 2010 moratorium on defence-related cooperation with Iran in the case of Russia, and the less publicised decision of Ukraine to

⁵ Belarusian defence industries, especially export-oriented segments, were far less influential and important for the national economy in the period under consideration compared to respective branches in Russia and Ukraine. The short-lived prominence of Belarus in the arms trade was highly exaggerated due to political circumstances (the catastrophic image of the Belarusian government in the West in the 1990s - 2010s).

give up cooperation on several major projects with Iran in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The latter was related to the decision by Kyiv not to supply equipment to the Bushehr NPP in 1998.

4.2.1. The 1995 Gore-Chernomyrdin Agreement

The financial losses incurred by Russia in connection with the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum are assessed by sources close to government agencies to account for \$2bn (RIA Novosti 19.01.2015). According to another well-informed source, the actual figure might be even higher – some \$4bn. About half of that sum consisted of losses from already concluded contracts; the other half came from losses related to contracts negotiated before the Memorandum was implemented (Nezavisimaya gazeta 19.10.2000).

Together with indirect financial and non-financial losses, this meant significant damage for the Russian government, and an even bigger loss for Russian defence firms. This loss was especially acute in the mid- to late 1990s, when Russia was struggling with the consequences of economic reforms, defence budget cuts and the 1998 financial crisis.

By following through with the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum, the Russian government and Russian defence industries were dealt a much harder blow than by the later reduction and halt of defence cooperation with Iran in the late 2000s. In the 1990s, the Russian government was still failing to rake in the high profits from oil and gas exports it would in the 2000s, and lost Iranian contracts meant lost tax revenues and the necessity to provide state support for the defence firms which lost their deals with Tehran.

Even given the assessed direct losses – amounting to \$4bn – this was big money for Moscow: in the Russian federal budget for the fiscal year 1995, when the Memorandum was adopted, expenditures were calculated at less than \$62bn. What's more, Russian defence firms were still struggling to adapt to the new economic realities of the market economy and budget cuts as they had very few solvent customers. However, they would fare significantly better on each of these accounts by the late 2000s, when Moscow would once again limit and then halt defence cooperation with Tehran.

Last but not least, by halting cooperation with Iran, Moscow undermined a promising chance to geographically diversify Russian arms sales and defence cooperation. According to different estimates, at the end of the 1990s up to 80% of Russian military exports went to India and China, and active attempts by Russian defence firms to win over markets elsewhere were largely fruitless (Kommersant Vlast' 06.06.2016).

4.2.2. Implementation of UN Sanctions against Iran in 2010

Limiting and then complete halting defence-related cooperation with Iran in the late 2000s – a result of the 2010 measures aimed at implementing the UN Security Council sanctions against Iran – was a less dramatic move by the Kremlin *per se*. Russian leadership – increasingly worried about Iran's activities and aware of Western, Arab and Israeli sensitivity with regard to Iran's development – did not allow Russian-Iranian cooperation in the 2000s to reach the heights of the 1990s. Still, Russia lost economically. These losses were again particularly felt by the Russian defence industry, as it evidently could not compensate for its losses by cooperating with the West or Iran's opponents.

The new alternatives were always much smaller-scale than previous deals with Iran: cooperation with the West or Israel never played a major role for the Russian defence industry, and other alternatives to Iranian money, such as Arab states' promises to purchase Russian weapons, remained mostly just promises. The government, at least, was able to offset the revenues it lost by cutting off defence relations with Tehran by improving relations with other countries, making alternative economic deals in non-military branches and other *quid pro quo* arrangements (e.g., getting some benefits and assistance in the security or intelligence sphere from other states) in exchange for giving up cooperation with Tehran. In other words, Russia renounced defence-related cooperation with Iran at the expense of the Russian defence industry and structures associated with it (entities involved in arms trade, etc.).

Direct losses caused by the 2010 disruption of defence-related cooperation with Iran are estimated at \$11-13bn (RIA Novosti 19.01.2015), although the figure may be exaggerated. Based on analysis conducted during this study, Russia's losses were more likely around \$5-6bn. Even if RIA Novosti's figures are more accurate, the blow does not seem as severe for the government as that of the late 1990s caused by the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum. By the late 2010s, the Russian economy – stimulated by rising oil prices and burgeoning Russian oil income – grew resilient to such losses. In comparison, in the following fiscal year (2011) the expenditures of the Russian federal budget reached \$367.5bn.

The inability of the Russian defence industry and its representatives in the government to prevent the 2010 break with Iran shows how little leverage they had, especially given the relatively solid legal ground the industry had to oppose some of the 2010 decisions (such as the S-300s and whether they were covered by UN Security Council Resolutions). While the Russian oil and gas industry developed rapidly in the 2000s, defence industries achieved more limited results. For them the loss of Iranian deals became a significant

problem. The Tula Arms Plant [*Tulsky oruzheiny zavod*] is a good illustration of this: in its 2010 annual report it described the following dramatic consequences of the Russian government's implementation of sanctions against Iran:

“the loss of production volumes [at the Plant] amounted to about 50% of the total production volume in the entire plant. [...] sales revenue during the reporting [2010] year decreased, compared to 2009, by 29.8%.

This has led to an acute shortage of working capital, including the payment of wages of the employees. [...] the arrears of wages as of 1 January 2011 amounted to 58,019,000 RUB [ca. \$1,902,262], overdue payments to non-budget funds [prosrochennaya zadolzhennost' vo vnebyudzhetnye fondy] came to 51,061,000 RUB [\$1,674,131]...

Compared to 2009, the total volume of production manufactured by the Company at current prices decreased by 32.2% (and by 23% in comparable prices). [...] production losses exceeded 500m RUB [\$16,393,443].” (Tulskii oruzheinyi... 2010)

Although the consequences of halting defence-related cooperation with Iran in the late 2000s were not as dramatic for Russia as a decade earlier, they were considerable. Numerous large enterprises of various profiles (e.g., Almaz-Antei, producing SAM systems; Zvyozdochka, overhauling and modernising submarines; Tula Arms Plant, producing anti-tank weapons) were affected. Once again, the arms industry had to give in to the decision of the Kremlin to stop working with Tehran.

4.2.3. The Ukrainian Government’s Policy of Reducing Cooperation with Iran

The ultimate consequences of Ukraine ending defence-related cooperation with Iran in the late 1990s and early 2000s remain unclear, although the circumstantial evidence related to the activities of famous Ukrainian firms indicates that deals with Iran were halted without appropriate compensation or offsets of their resulting losses. In particular, after the Malyshev Factory (which produced mechanised armoured vehicles) gave up its projects with Iran in the early 2000s and the Antonov firm (which produced aircraft) reduced its cooperation with Iran, neither of them succeeded in getting comparable new contracts, and their attempts to enter Western markets failed. For instance, in 2009 Ukraine – apparently with the US support – drew up a \$550m contract with Iraq on the supply of BTR-4 infantry fighting vehicles, six An-32 transport aircraft and overhaul of a number of helicopters.

However, the contract remained mostly unimplemented and was cancelled in 2013. The implemented portion – delivery of six An-32 – cannot be compared with what Antonov

would have earned by working with Iran.

Ukraine's renunciation of a similar contract on delivery of equipment for the Bushehr NPP in Iran can help shed light on the scale of losses and the failure of proponents of cooperation with Iran to convince their government to support their efforts.

In the case of the Bushehr contract, losses were severe even for the government, which did not receive any compensation from the US or other countries for halting cooperation, despite Washington's launching a so-called Kharkiv initiative.

The results of the Kharkiv initiative were meagre. In March 2002, Prime Minister Anatoliy Kinakh stated that the US had failed to implement promises they had made to Ukraine in order to convince it to renounce its contract with Iran in 1998 (Ukrainska pravda 16.10.2002).

The decision of the Ukrainian government to tear up its contracts with Iran caused considerable acrimony among those involved with the Kharkiv region's industries directly affected by the decision, as well as among and political forces known for their scepticism toward the US. Even a proponent of Ukraine's rapprochement to the US in 2010 concluded that:

"Because of this [decision to renounce our contract with Iran] we have lost contracts worth billions, new jobs, and an opportunity for the technological development of the national energy branch. For all that [sacrifice], we received nothing, because the so called Kharkiv initiatives, then declared, did not lead to an economic boom neither in Kharkiv region nor in the country in general" (Hrytsenko 2010).

In 2000, a prominent expert of the Razumkov Centre, an influential think-tank known to support Euroatlantic integration, also argued for cooperation with the countries which had difficulties with the West by writing: "Renouncing political engagement, [adopting] a pragmatic mindset and taking our own mistakes into account will allow us in the future to take part in the implementation of transnational oil and gas projects in risky countries [Iran, Iraq, Libya]" (Saprykin 2000).

If the losses were significant for the government, for the defence branch they were fatal. Neither Ukrainian nuclear equipment-producing firms, nor the defence industry had many alternatives to the Iranian deals they had given up.

The defence industry in all three post-Soviet countries had very limited leverage over their respective national governments. Ukraine and Russia's aspirations to integrate with the West and look for ways to establish better relations with opponents of the Iranian

government (such as Israel or conservative Arab monarchies) negatively affected defence-related cooperation with Iran. Despite the somewhat desperate situation of the branch and the available opportunities to launch new projects with Tehran, after a few years both the Ukrainian and Russian defence industries had to accept the demands of their governments and stop or reduce cooperation with Tehran.

4.3. Legal Uncertainty and Defence Export Systems in Post-Soviet Countries

The process of political changes and socio-economic transformation which started in the USSR in the late 1980s made the previously existing Soviet system of arms exports increasingly ineffective. Soviet and post-Soviet governments both consciously loosened their former control over the economic activities of the defence industry and failed to cope rapidly with the new economic order. As a result of foreign trade liberalisation, numerous Soviet entities, both government-owned and private, were able to enter the market as sellers of defence-related goods and services. Meanwhile, the Soviet system of intellectual property rights failed in the new market economy.

This situation continued at least until the mid-1990s. Newly independent states lacked mature legal systems, especially regarding export control and intellectual property rights. Dividing the heritage of Soviet R&D and industry among post-Soviet republics meant disseminating vast volumes of potentially sensitive capacities, technologies and know-how.

That is how a foreign businessman described the situation in Russia in the 1990s:

“...I decided to deal solely with the heads of institutions and to insist that they produce the documents confirming that my interlocutors were authorised to sell me what they were offering. Intellectual property rights? They had never heard about them. Patents? There were very few technologies patented. Of course, there were so called “inventors’ certificates” [avtorskoe svidetelstvo] on technologies which development was initially funded by military, but every time I asked for an inventor’s certificate for a specific technology, I was told that it does not exist or it is still classified. Sometimes I was shown certificates with the “Secret” stamp crossed-out by hand. “I cannot accept that,” - I said. My interlocutors deliberated a few minutes; then one went into the back room and made a copy of the certificate, closing the stamp with a blank piece of paper. Or he took a razor, cut out the stamp, and handed a copy to me as if it should be so.” (Pope 2003)

Reforms in export control systems were yet another cause for legal uncertainty. Two government agencies played key roles in military export in the final years of the USSR: the

Main Engineering Directorate (*Glavnoe inzhenernoe upravlenie*, or GIU) and the Main Technical Directorate (*Glavnoe tekhnicheskoe upravlenie*, or GTU). Since 1988, both of them were parts of the Ministry of External Economic Relation. They analysed the requests and needs of foreign countries, prepared drafts of official decisions and contracts, ensured deliveries, and took care of settlements for deliveries or services.

In 1992, the Russian government transformed the GIU into the External Trade Associations Oboroneksport and the GTU into the External Trade State-Owned Company Spetsvneshtekhnika, only to unite them in November 1993 into the state-owned company Rosvooruzhenie, which worked in the sphere of military equipment export. It was “an independent commercial organisation the activities of which were not controlled by any of the federal bodies of executive power” (Rosoboroneksport 2015).

Alongside Rosvooruzhenie, the Russian Defence Ministry, particularly its so-called 10th Directorate, also maintained the right to sell weapons from the army's stocks. According to an insider report:

“In 1992-1995, everything and everyone was on sale. And it could not be otherwise - if there is chaos in the government [gosudarstve], so there will be chaos everywhere. Nobody really controlled how the military was selling weapons: they did whatever they wanted, and, as it turned out later, they indiscriminately sold everyone everything” (Kommersant Vlast' 06.06.2016).

Finally, in December 1994, the State Committee on Military-Technical Cooperation was founded to return some control to the government. The committee had direct access to the president and could authorise enterprises to engage in external economic activities.

To solve the problem of foreign trade activities by the Defence Ministry, in August 1997 President Yeltsin issued a Decree On Measures Aimed at Strengthening State Control of Foreign Trade Activities in the Sphere of Military-Technical Cooperation of the Russian Federation with Foreign States. It established a new company, Promeksport, which was to sell military equipment no longer needed by the Russian armed forces after army reform.

The Kremlin implemented a radical reform on military exports in November 2000 by establishing a “special exporter” of arms, military and special equipment, called Rosoboroneksport. The latter was a merger of two older entities: Promeksport and Rosvooruzhenie. At the same time, the Committee on Military Technical Cooperation was created within the Defence Ministry.

According to Sergei Chemezov, who was involved in the reform: “It was decided to

construct a so-called *presidential vertical* to tie the system to the president, which was to have the last word on the issue of arms transfers to various countries, and to create under the head of state a commission or collective body [*to consider these issues*]” (Kommersant 03.06.2016). Essentially this meant the establishment of a single state intermediary for military exports.

Rosoboroneksport received the right to conduct external economic activities as far as completed products were concerned; meanwhile, the factories producing these products lost that right. In 2007, Rosoboroneksport became a subsidiary company of the state holding company Rostekhnologii (Rostec).

Ukraine. In the early 1990, three Ukrainian branch-based foreign trade organisations were active in international arms markets:

- *Ukrinmash*, which operated under the Ministry of Machine-Building, Defence Industries and Conversion;
- *Prohres*, under the Ministry of Industry;
- *Ukroboronservis*, under the Ministry of External Economic Relations and Trade. (Ukrspeceexport 2015).

Despite Ukrainian President Kuchma’s 31 December 1991 Decree No. 28 establishing a Commercial Centre under the Defence Ministry, strict control over arms sales was not ensured. On the contrary, the Centre itself became involved in dubious business activities.

Other entities were also given the right to engage in trade with defence products, such as the International Public Foundation Diloza Diaspora Ukrainy (Argument 12.11.2013). As early as 20 January 1992, the president signed Decree No. 45 on the establishment of the State Company Ukrainsky dom. This firm was authorised, *inter alia*, to export arms and military equipment. Such entities proliferated and, according to some experts, in 1996 114 firms were authorised to sell Ukrainian military equipment (Argument 12.11.2013).

The Ukrainian arms trade was accompanied by a series of scandals caused by dubious deals. These scandals were – in absolute and proportional terms – more numerous than those connected with Russian and Belarusian arms trade. The most publicised scandals occurred: in the 1990s as Ukraine allegedly delivered arms to Croatia and Bosnia, in the 2000s to Iraq and Libya, and to African countries throughout the period under consideration.

An investigation conducted in 1997-1998 by a special parliamentary commission into

illegal arms exports revealed the huge scale of illegal business involving high officials, even up to the Deputy Prime Minister. According to the report, as a result of the illegal arms trade Ukraine lost about \$30-32bn (Versii 06.07.2002).

Mykola Melnychenko, a prominent whistle-blower who revealed the machinations of the Kuchma presidency, characterised the situation thus: “Ukraine as a state has no relation to the illegal sale of weapons to any country. Senior Ukrainian officials were involved in illegal arms sales” (Korrespondent.net 22.05.2002). However, the involvement of so many high-level officials means that however illegal the arms deals were, they were conducted through government-controlled channels. In other words, large-scale defence-related deals remained within the domain of the state.

On 14 August 1996, the State Company Ukrspecexport was founded. It consisted of three branch-based firms as subsidiary enterprises [*dochernie predpriyatiya*]: Ukrinmash, Prohres and Ukroboronservis. Later on, Ukrspecexport also included three other state-owned firms: Promoboroneksport, Spetstekhnoeksport and TASKO-Eksport (Ukrspecexport 2015).

In the early 2000s, Kyiv began to strengthen control over defence-related corporations; the Ukrainian media characterised this development as a “purge of special exporters” (Zerkalo nedeli 12.12.2003). On 15 November 2002, Ukraine's President issued Edict 1040/2002 which, *inter alia*, included the following requirements of the government:

1. The list of companies authorised to export and import military-use commodities would be shortened;
2. Defence-industry firms would need to go only through *Ukrspecexport* to conduct negotiations with foreign customers on export-import operations with military- and dual-use commodities. To comply with the order to shorten the list of actors authorised to engage in exporting Ukrainian arms, in December 2003 *Ukrspecexport* liquidated two out of five of its subsidiary firms: *Promoboroneksport* and *Spetstekhnoeksport* (Zerkalo nedeli 12.12.2003).

According to military analyst Anatoliy Hrytsenko:

“I cannot say that our system prevents the unauthorised sale of weapons to any other state. [...] before this year there was no legislative basis for activities in this sphere. It was fully regulated by decrees of the President of Ukraine and the decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers. This year [2003], a basic law on the supply of weapons has been adopted, but it will take some time to make it work. The second reason [for the problems] is that in our

country everything depends on personalities. And who occupies key positions is very important.”

According to him, Ukraine's main security agency, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) oversaw arms export despite the fact that many of its former officers worked in firms and organisations which dealt with arms export. This resulted in conflicts of interest (Ukrainska pravda. 11.08.2003).

Belarus. The Belarusian system of arms export developed along its own lines. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus also faced a period of chaotic arms export which lasted approximately from 1991 till 1994. At that time, despite the fact that the External Relations Department of the Defence Ministry exerted formal control over arms trade, arms were sold through other firms and possibly even via Ukrainian traders. These deals were legally dubious even granted that national legislation lacked norms on the export of military equipment and services at the time.

By the mid-1990s, the sector had begun to consolidate, and firms appeared which would come to dominate arms and defence-services export. These were the state-owned companies *Belvneshpromservis* (founded in 1991), *Belarusintorg* (founded in the early 1990s) and *Belpetsvneshtekhnika* (operating since 1995), and the privately-owned *Beltekheksport* (founded in 1993).

In the early 2000s, *Belvneshpromservis*, *Belarusintorg* and *Belpetsvneshtekhnika* faced criminal charges due to irregularities found in their business activities, including contracts with Iran. Several leading managers from each of these enterprises were sentenced to prison terms, including Alexander Andron, director of *Belvneshpromservis*, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison for kickbacks and illegal activities related to negotiations with an Iranian delegation.

According to a well-informed but hardly objective analyst, this resulted in the marginalisation of two leading Belarusian military export firms (*Belvneshpromservis*, *Belpetsvneshtekhnika*) and the closing of a third one (*Belarusintorg*) (Sheremet 2012). However, the criminal cases seem not to have mattered, as *Belvneshpromservis* and *Belpetsvneshtekhnika* remained active until the mid-2010s.

Unlike Russia, it seems that the Belarusian government did not designate a single state intermediary firm in the field of arms exports throughout its years of independence into the 2010s, although such exports were certainly coordinated by the State Military Industrial Committee. In the 2010s, such exports went through two state-owned companies:

Belspetsvneshtekhnika and *Belvneshpromservis*, as well as through a privately-owned company, *Beltekheksport*. In addition, many Belarusian defence enterprises were also authorised to conduct business abroad (Barabanov 2012).

In addition to already licensed export and import of arms and dual-use goods, in March 2013 the Presidential Edict No. 109 introduced obligatory licensing for “intermediary services related to the movement (delivery) of specific goods from one foreign country to another.” This meant that Minsk would have a “completely closed sphere of trade in arms and dual-use goods from ‘casual’ players” (AFN 06.03.2013).

Regulations did not stop there: in April 2013 the Belarusian president issued another edict, No. 163, which came into force retroactively (since May 2002). This edict established the institute of special exporters of specific, i.e., military and dual-use, goods, granting the status of special exporters to three companies: the state-owned *Belvneshpromservis* and *Belspetsvneshtekhnika* and the private firm *Beltekheksport*. This formalised the reduction of players involved in the export of military and dual-use equipment and services.

To sum up, in the final two years of the existence of the Soviet Union, as well as in the 1990s and early 2000s in all three states under consideration, state control over transfers of defence-related equipment, materials, technologies, and provision of defence-related services to foreign countries met with considerable difficulties, especially in the first half of the 1990s. Basically, this meant that considerable export of defence-related goods and services was possible outside government-controlled channels.

There is no doubt that Tehran saw this situation as an opportunity to acquire what it needed for the modernisation of its armed forces and defence industries. The following sections in this Chapter shall investigate whether this actually occurred, or whether Iran was unable to take advantage of this window of opportunity.

4.4. Non-Authorised Transfers of Equipment, Services and Expertise

The transitional period between the Soviet and post-Soviet eras over the entire former Soviet space was shaped by administrative chaos and dysfunctional governance. This created numerous opportunities for informal and even illegal deals on military equipment and technologies. Agents of the Iranian government used these opportunities to buy necessary hardware, technology and know-how. What’s more, they were able to secure lower prices than what was officially demanded. This was the case in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus until the mid-1990s.

In the early 1990s, foreign customers looking for Soviet military equipment were often

forced to resort to informal channels. The collapse of central Soviet organisations and agencies led to the disappearance of many centralised establishments, including those which dealt with defence-related international contacts. “No longer able to deal with a single Soviet ministry for parts, they must now run from factory to factory, from republic to republic, trying to arrange separate contracts, or they simply cannibalize new planes, tanks and machinery.” (New York Times 03.02.1993)

Commenting on the problem of rogue military hardware purchases, the director of the newly established Rosvooruzhenie firm said:

“The main problem now encountered by Rosvooruzhenie were the constant attempts - undertaken by Iranians, Indians and Syrians, who already yesterday had become accustomed to easy play on our market - to bring down prices by contacting manufacturers directly and taking advantage of their difficult situation. [...] It all boiled down to the usual monetary handout for a middle-level official or a middle-level production manager. And this is one of the reasons why the president decided to form the company Rosvooruzhenie. After all, a bunch of mediators have emerged who really did manage to get the desired paper from government bodies outcome. They bluntly asked their counterparts, what do you need: a license, a permit, an official letter? No problem. After a while they really did come back with the required documents.” (Kommersant Vlast' 29.11.1994)

Iran's search for military equipment and technology through informal channels provoked rebukes even from Russian officials known to have a critical attitude toward the West and Israel. Thus, in 1996, Russia's Foreign Minister Primakov reminded his Iranian counterpart, Velayati: “Your ambassador believes that it is possible in Russia, without the knowledge of the Foreign Ministry, to cooperate in the military-technical sphere with various Russian agencies. We need to remind him that he has no right to forget about the Foreign Ministry and Primakov” (Mahdiyan 2014: 102).

To allay international concerns, Moscow tried to establish a legal framework for export to Iran. On 23 December 1996, Russia signed the Memorandum of Understanding in the Export Control Sphere with Iran. However, the problem persisted, and on 10 December 1998 another Russian official, known to be close to Primakov and a member of the Communist Party, First Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Maslyukov, also “called for tightened control over the export of equipment and expertise to Iran” (Associated Press 1998).

As described in the previous section, it took many years for the Kremlin to consolidate a state monopoly on transfer of military equipment abroad. Although this policy was launched in about 2000, it was not until the late 2000s that the process was complete.

Rosoboronexport, established in 2000, removed the right to do business abroad from manufacturing enterprises, at least as far as finished products were concerned, although they did retain the right to supply spare parts.

The administration and managers of enterprises resisted this move. The Tula Instrument Design Bureau [*KB Priborostroeniya*] reportedly opposed the change especially aggressively, as prior to the 2007 withdrawal of their license to sell the antitank systems Kornet-E abroad they had been selling them for \$150-200m per year, acting essentially on their own. They were allowed to complete their already signed contracts but ordered to stop the practice of concluding their own deals (Kommersant Vlast' 06.06.2016).

Numerous post-Soviet firms took advantage of the legal uncertainty following the collapse of the Soviet Union to survive economically, especially after losing Soviet-era state orders. “Some enterprises in Ukraine conducted unauthorised negotiations with representatives of countries which were sanctioned at the time of negotiations. Thus, in 1996 the Kharkiv-based firm Montazhelektro negotiated a contract with Libya on repairing aircraft and navy equipment ... and when in the same year [1996] a scandal unexpectedly unfolded between the Ukrspesexport and Kharkiv-based Malyshev Factory because of the quality of armoured transport vehicles delivered to Jordan, it also became clear that the management of the factory (which at that time had a licence to sell arms) had been conducting unsanctioned negotiations with Iran.” (Badrak 2004)

Besides informal and unregulated deals, numerous illegal transactions occurred. Their scale is difficult to assess as general statistical data on violations of arms export regulations are practically unavailable. Nevertheless, according to the Ukrainian Security Service SBU, in 1997-2001 foreign firms and their representatives tried to purchase arms in Ukraine and transfer them abroad by violating international restrictions or using fake documents more than 20 times. The SBU succeeded in detecting and halting them (Badrak 2004). In the following year, the SBU revealed 36 cases of illegal activity in the sphere of military-technical cooperation (Pres-Tsentr SBU 25.03.2003), some of which might have involved highly sensitive products. In particular, in 2002 the SBU claimed to have detained and deported a foreign citizen who had tried to smuggle some elements of a missile guidance system through Ukrainian territory (Tsentr doslidzhen' armii 2012: 27).

Iran's most significant successes in acquiring defence-related equipment, technologies, materials and expertise outside government-controlled channels of cooperation with (F)SU nations might have been the illegal transfer in the 1990s-early 2000s of a Shkval torpedo and a Kh-55 cruise missile. These cases are considered below.

Shkval torpedo. In 2006, Iran demonstrated its Hoot torpedo, which numerous analysts believed to be based on or even identical with the Soviet-designed Shkval torpedo. There is, however, no proof that the technology or actual Shkval torpedoes were transferred to Iran by Russia. Various experts and media sources have pointed out the existence of several other sources from which Iran could have acquired torpedoes or technology other than Russia.

Mir, a major post-Soviet TV channel of the time, suggested immediately after the Hoot's display that Iran could have acquired the technology not only from Russia but also from Kyrgyzstan, where the Dastan Factory was producing torpedoes, including the Shkval (NTV Mir 2006).

Richard Fisher assumed that the Chinese might have assisted Iran in production of the Hoot. He referred to certain "Taiwanese sources" which informed him that "China was able to reverse-engineer some version of the Shkval, following its reported purchase from Kyrgyzstan in 1998. As such, it is possible that China may also be a possible technology source for Iran's Hoot." (Fisher 2006)

At the Russian court proceedings for Pope's case, Evgeny Shahidzhanov, general director of the State Scientific Production Enterprise Region which produced and sold the Shkval torpedo abroad, insisted that the technology on which the Shkval was based was "essentially unique and cost good money," but was not secret. State prosecutor Oleg Plotnikov responded that information on the Shkval and its fuel is secret, despite the publication of its technical data in the media for marketing purposes. As Pope himself insisted: "Shkval already for some years [by 2001] was being sold abroad" (Pope 2003).

Indeed, the Russian media at the time of Pope's process remarked that: "Canadian and American special services tried to buy the torpedo [*Shkval*] in... Kyrgyzstan [...]. The "specialists" on navy armaments also approached a secret Ukrainian research facility which worked on the same physics issues which were used in the development of this weapon." Further as early as 2002, some Russian journalists admitted that the Shkval torpedo was not secret and was already possessed by China (Warlib.ru 2002)

In 2000, a representative of Shkval's manufacturer told the Russian liberal web-site Grani.Ru: "in light of the almost complete absence of defence orders from Russia's Defence Ministry, the Scientific Production Enterprise Region created an export variant of the underwater rocket Shkval-E, which is approved for export and which sparked tremendous interest for many countries" (Grani.ru 2000).

Pope's lawyer, Pavel Astakhov, claimed that several other post-Soviet countries besides Russia also possessed the technology to produce the Shkval. Among them, he named Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Astakhov also claimed that in 1998 Kazakhstan had delivered more than 40 Shkval torpedoes to China (Grani.ru 2000). Less publicity was given to the idea that Iranians could have acquired the Shkval's technology from Ukraine, where the institution which had designed the basics for the Shkval was located. In fact, the Research Institute of Applied Hydromechanics in Kiev played a major part in developing the Shkval, alongside other institutions.

Even more notable is that the Hoot torpedoes' capabilities were demonstrated only once during the entire period under consideration, in 2006. Although it was mentioned on several occasions later, the name itself had disappeared from all public statements in Iran by the early 2010s. This casts doubt on Tehran's claims that it possessed such Iranian manufactured weapons.

Kh-55. In 2001, several Kh-55 cruise missiles were transferred from Ukraine to Iran. Some sources claim there were 12 of them (Warner 2005). These missiles which boast a range of 3,000 km, can carry nuclear warheads. They were, however, sold without them.

The possibility of manipulation emerged as Ukraine eliminated certain armaments, thus complying with its international obligations. By spring 2002, Ukraine destroyed 483 Kh-55 missiles, among other weapons. The US funded these measures, which were carried out by a company belonging to Ukraine's Ministry of Defence (Tsentri issledovaniy armii 2006). After the Orange revolution, new Ukrainian government officials revealed a deal which included the sale of six such missiles to China in 2004, although the extent to which the Ukrainian government had been involved in missile transfer remains unclear, especially given the fact that the Ministry of Defence was responsible for the missiles' elimination.

According to Grigori Omelchenko, a former Ukrainian Security Service official and later a member of parliament, general director of Ukrspetsexport at the time Valeri Malev knew that the cruise missiles were intended for countries other than Russia and that fake documents had been used. In addition to the missiles, the ground technical equipment which was needed to maintain and prepare the missile for flight had been sent to Iran, and specialists from Ukraine had travelled to Iran to train Iranian specialists.

During a court trial held concerning this case in Ukraine, several technical details were presented. The defence attorney Bohdan Ferents, who defended Volodymyr Yevdokimov, general director of Ukraviazakaz, claimed that Iran and China had received only useless and outdated items. According to him, the eight-year service lifetime of the transferred

missiles, which had been produced in 1987, had expired long before the transfer. Although it would have been possible for the producing factory to extend it, it did not.

Likewise, the technical documentation concerning the missiles and warhead were removed from Ukraine to Russia. The court also questioned the former commander of the Ukrainian Air Force, Volodymyr Strelnikov, who inspected the missiles in Iran. Strelnikov allegedly said that a sign “for training” [*uchebnye*] was on the missiles and they were not complete (Goncharov 2011).

Some of Ferents's claims cannot be completely true. Ukraine possessed at least some technology related to the Kh-55, even after the scandal. As late as 2008 the Motor Sich corporation produced engine motors for the missiles Kh-35, Kh-55 and Kh-59 (Korrespondent.net 17.06.2008).

The Ukrainian State Export Control Service (Derzheksportkontrol) commented on the Kh-55 affair by pointing out that the “correct terminology” should be used. According to this agency, it should not be presumed that Ukraine had transferred missiles to China and Iran, thereby violating the norms of the Missile Technologies Control Regime (or in the case of Iran the Security Council sanctions)⁶. Instead, Derzheksportkontrol argued that the wares had been smuggled on their way from Ukraine to Russia (Tsentr doslidzhen' armii 2012: 23).

It is important to note that Iran lacked a platform for the Kh-55, which was usually carried by the Soviet strategic bombers Tu-95MS and Tu-160. There were suggestions that the Su-24 could be used instead (NBC News 18.03.2005; Fox News 02.02.2005).

The technical difficulties of deploying the Kh-55 on the Su-24, however, were very serious. For instance, the Kh-55 is significantly heavier than armaments designed with the Su-24 in mind. Its starting weight is 1,700 kg, while the heaviest missile usually deployed on Su-24s, the Kh-58, has a starting weight of 640 kg. Safely deploying such missiles on the Su-24 – if indeed possible – would require a major redesign of the aircraft itself, which was most probably beyond the technological capabilities of Iranian engineers at the time.

Other known cases of informal or illegal transfers to Iran involved less sensitive items, and it is sometimes unclear whether they were really intended for military use. Thus, in early 1998, 22 tons of stainless steel were intercepted by Azerbaijani customs authorities en route to Tehran. The US informed the Russian government about the plan to transport the stainless-steel cargo to Iran. When Moscow failed to stop the delivery and the truck

⁶ It is not clear which sanctions were meant.

departed for Iran, Azerbaijan detained it on 26 March 1998 at Astara on the Iranian border. The shipment had been sent by a firm called Europalas-2000 and transported by a MOSO company called. Baku announced that the shipping documents had declared a different type of steel than was actually transported, and sent a sample to the Americans. After the interception of the shipment, Russian agencies arrested three men from Tajikistan for involvement in smuggling the steel. US government agencies claimed that Iran planned to use it to produce Scud missiles (Gordon and Schmitt 1998).

The decrease in the volumes of deals with Iran resulted in attempts to smuggle spare parts for even low-technology arms, such as mechanised armoured vehicles. On 21 August 2003, a 28-ton shipment of spare parts for tanks and aircraft, along with night goggles, was intercepted in the Riga airport in Latvia on its way from Russia to Tehran (Gazeta.ru 21.08.2003).

The Ukrainian Firm Zaporizzhya Regional Foreign Economic Association (*Zaporizhs'ka Regionalna Zovnishnyoekonomichna Assotsiatsiya (ZRFEA)*), supplied Iran with special types of metals, ball bearings used in liquid propellant missile systems, and perhaps other materials. These included both materials controlled by the MTCR (such as 08X22HGT titanium stabilized duplex stainless steel) and not controlled by the regime (CR18NI10TI stainless steel). These were believed to have been used in Scud-Nodong-derived missile types (including Iran's Shahab missiles series).

As de-classified US government documents underline: “It is possible that these activities [*of the ZRFEA*] were taking place without the knowledge of the Ukrainian government.” However, in a talk with Ukrainian officials, a US diplomat pointed out that the issue of Ukrainian firms supplying Iran with sensitive materials had been raised in 2002-2007, and was still not resolved by the late 2000s (The Guardian 06.12.2010).

Tehran was also eager to hire post-Soviet technical experts for training, advising and providing maintenance services. It quite successfully did so until the late 2000s, even for highly sensitive fields. An analyst from Ukraine's Centre for Army, Conversion, and Disarmament Studies, Oleksiy Breus assessed that by early 2000 about 1,000 scientists, among them 300 doctors of sciences, left Ukraine. Moreover, about 200 Ukrainian nuclear specialists went to work in Iran (Tsentri doslidzhen' armii 2012: 23).

Some of the experts hired by Tehran had previously worked at world-renowned research, design and education centres such as the Moscow Aviation Institute (MAI). Starting in 1996, MAI faculty also started to go to Tehran to lecture: “Dozens of Russian missile specialists left for Iran, including the specialists on guidance systems, metallurgy and

aerodynamics.” The first group of missiles experts included five persons. They were also urged to conduct for Iran some research and design projects getting for them up to \$100,000 a project (Dobbs 2002).

Among those who did so were prominent specialists such as the dean of the Motor-Building Faculty of the MAI, professor Vadim Vorobey. In 1996-2000 he travelled to Iran to lecture more than ten times, every time for a week and sometimes for two. Vorobey taught at “a technical college in Tehran” and advised Iranians on missiles. Another MAI faculty member who lectured in Iran, Vasili Loginov, was an expert on reaction engines (both jet aircraft and rocket variations), internal combustion engines, and engine production.

Loginov and Vorobey also worked for Iran's Energy Ministry on projects aimed at designing high-technical joints [*vysokotekhnichnye sochleneniya*], developing methods of production for turbine mechanisms, and studying different types of springs. After the Russian authorities responded to US and Israeli protests, Vorobey had to move his cooperation with Tehran outside MAI and established a separate company. MAI administration succeeded in completely halting this cooperation in its new form in the summer of 2000 by threatening to expel Vorobey from the Institute (Dobbs 2002).

Trips by MAI faculty to Iran remained secret, and Russia denied that its scientists were helping Tehran. According to one of them, in 1996-7 he encountered no real difficulties in going to Iran. Moreover, he went there with the permission of his superiors at the MAI. Only in 1998 was he asked by Russian authorities to stop working for Iran, and MAI administration only exerted real pressure after the US cancelled research contracts with the Institute valued at one million US dollars (*Ibid*).

The MAI thus sometimes proceeded in a “grey” legal zone, moreover with the knowledge of the Russian government. What’s more, according to insiders, even trips by MAI faculty members, at least in 1996-8, occurred as part of an intergovernmental agreement between Russia and Iran (bg.ru 10.04.2004).

Tehran also hired ordinary technicians familiar with maintenance of Soviet-made weapons. This was especially necessary when the Iranian armed forces had to deal with types of equipment which was new for them. For example, in 1994 Iran employed some Ukrainian specialists to help restore an Su-22, a formerly Iraqi-owned bomber. However, this project failed (Taghvaei 2014: 70).

Transfers by agents outside government control occurred, but their scale remained limited in several regards. First, the volumes involved were insufficient for Iran to satisfy any of its needs. As one insider put it:

“From overseas we heard protestations that Russians [from the MAI] were supplying Iranians with strategic manufacturing technologies. [...]nothing of this kind is possible, if only because the faculty go to Iran not more than three or four times a year and for no longer than a week, while any technology - it's a huge package of documents, even if it is only a new press mould [press-forma]. What transfer are they talking about?” (bg.ru. 10.04.2004)

Second, the advanced items and technologies transferred were too sophisticated for Iran to absorb for a long time. The general modernisation of the Iranian armed forces and defence industries would gain little from successful but isolated cases of transfers of very high-technology items or even designs and know-how.

This meant that government bodies and government-controlled agencies in post-Soviet countries remained the main actors in defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations, at least as far as the modernisation of the Iranian armed forces and defence industries was concerned. Any adventurous attempts to transfer defence-related goods and technologies or provide related services outside formal channels remained just that – adventurous profiteering without real influence over Iran's military capacities or balance of power in the region.

4.5. Iran's Financial Constraints

Iran's search for defence-related goods and services stemmed mainly from its exposure to external security threats. These included its ongoing rivalry with Iraq until 2003 and with the US throughout the period under consideration. On top of these two major threats were several less formidable ones, such as confrontation and competition with several Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia and its allies, instability in the South Caucasus in the 1990s and Afghanistan throughout the entire period. In those years, Tehran also faced domestic security threats (ethnic strife, armed political opposition, massive drug trafficking) which in many cases were of a trans-boundary nature (large-scale drug trafficking, Kurdish and Baluchi insurgencies, armed opposition groups, above all the MKO) and some international support (Iraqi support for MKO, DPKI, etc.). These threats were acutely felt: it is assumed that Tehran was willing to allocate funds for defence purposes even despite its economic difficulties.

The logic of military procurement suggests that Iran's demand for arms was limited by the

financial means available to it. This makes analysing the financial constraints Iran faced in defence-related cooperation with (F)SU nations a basic precondition for any further investigation of the issue.

First, this section considers the dynamics of Iran's defence budget. This analysis is far from perfect, as general defence budget figures represent all spending on national defence without specifying which funds were allocated for foreign arms purchases and other defence projects with foreign nations. Iran's defence expenditures consist of the operating costs of the Defence Ministry, the military part of the development budget, and the operating costs of the IRGC (Arnett 1997: 258).

After analysing total military expenditure, this section proceeds to consider evidence pointing to the influence of financial considerations on Iran's defence-related procurement decisions. This includes statements and facts on Iran's defence-related international cooperation in the period under consideration.

On several occasions, experts found signs that Iran was running out of money and had to review its purchase of military equipment. For instance, Arnett argued: "The official 1992 military allocation included \$850m for foreign exchange, as compared with \$1.5bn for 1987-88 and \$2.8bn for 1989-91, or \$750-940m annually." The 1996 budget, according to him, allocated just \$400m for all procurement, with the entire military budget coming to IRR5.8 trillion (\$2bn) (Arnett 1997: 258).

Morrison expressed a similar opinion. According to him, Iranian military imports in the early 1990s fell from \$2-3bn in 1991-92 to \$850m in 1993; this decline resulted from Iran's financial constraints rather than a political decision (Morrison 1994: 1964). Financial constraints also allegedly affected Iran's defence-related cooperation with Russia:

"Iran's deepening economic woes and a strict Western embargo on arms sales to Tehran [...] have forced the country to scale back sharply its military procurement plans... Billions of dollars in Iranian arms purchases -- including many orders from Russia or North Korea -- either have been put on hold or cancelled ..." (The Washington Post 18.11.1995)

Some Iranian military officials complained about a lack of funding. Thus, in 1993 Defence Minister Akbar Torkan claimed: "I would very much like the \$2bn a year [*probably referring to funds allocated for the procurement of equipment and services from abroad*] talked about in the West. But I don't have them. This year we have \$750m in actual dollars and somewhat less than the equivalent of \$1bn in rials" (Financial Times 08.02.1993).

The overview of Iran's spending on national defence in the period under consideration

presents a rather different picture. According to statistics published by SIPRI (SIPRI 2017), the dynamics of Iran's military expenditure in the 1988-2015 changed over time, as presented in the following Table 5:

Table 5. Iran's Military Expenditures in 1988-2015.

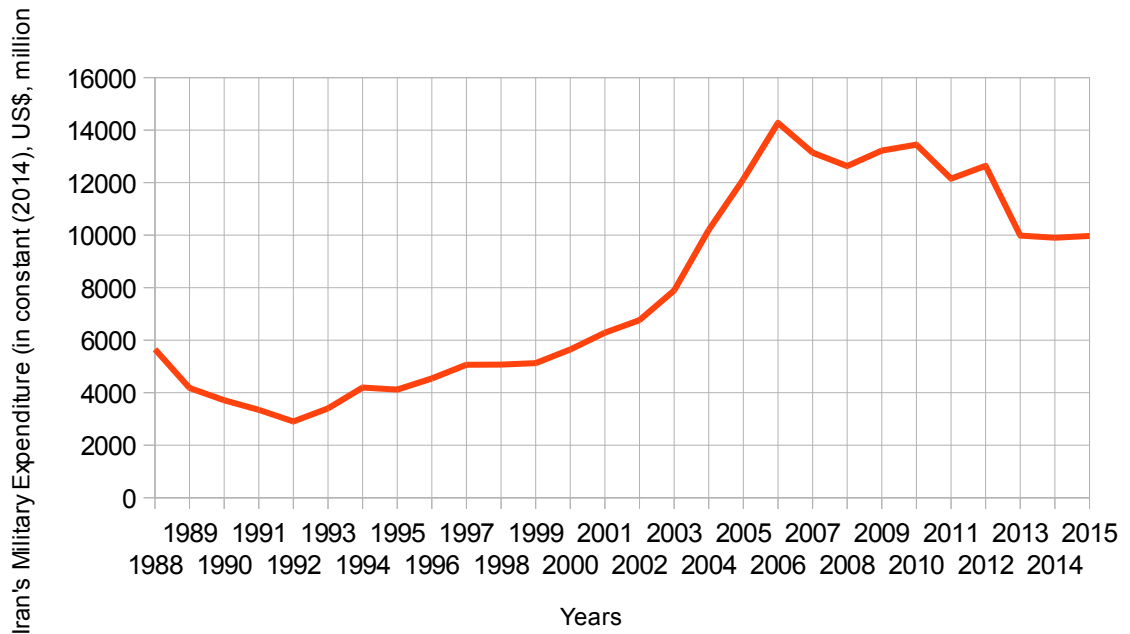
Financial Year⁷	Military Expenditures (in IRR, billion)	Military Expenditures (in constant (2014) US\$, million)
1988	1,345	5,653
1989	1,117	4,181
1990	1,124	3,712
1991	1,206	3,347
1992	1,323	2,905
1993	2,008	3,401
1994	3,303	4,198
1995	4,731	4,118
1996	6,715	4,541
1997	8,616	5,065
1998	9,931	5,069
1999	12,238	5,127
2000	15,517	5,645
2001	19,102	6,284
2002	23,507	6,764
2003	32,774	7,894
2004	49,300	10,201
2005	64,801	12,131
2006	85,412	14,276
2007	86,998	13,142
2008	110,316	12,629
2009	128,746	13,220
2010	142,498	13,446
2011	154,602	12,150
2012	216,229	12,639
2013	222,485	9,984
2014	268,307	9,901
2015	307,422	9,969

Note: Adapted from SIPRI (2015).

Figure 1. shows that military expenditures in Iran demonstrate several upticks and downturns. However, these were not so dramatic. The willingness of the government to spend on national defence remained quite stable.

Figure 1. Iran's Military Expenditures in 1988-2015⁸.

⁷ Starting 1 April.



SIPRI data mentioned above is based on the Institute's analysis and might be one of the best sources for assessing Iran's military spending; the Iranian government keeps its spending on defence matters secret. Only very general information providing little insight is released. An analyst commenting on the decline of the Iranian defence budget in the early 1990 warned that official Iranian defence budgets are “misleading.” What’s more, the government applied an exchange rate for the Iranian rial which was 20 times overvalued for certain “strategically important imports,” and some military expenditures were hidden in seemingly civilian parts of the national budget (Rieck 1994: 81).

Nevertheless, the SIPRI figures correspond with what is known about developments in Iran's defence efforts, including its purchases, R&D programmes, the size of its armed forces and defence industries and so forth. Given the known facts (see the sections of this thesis devoted to the development of the Iranian arms industry, equipment transfers, etc) it is improbable that these sums were considerably higher than those published by SIPRI. In a 1998 interview, Iranian Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani asserted:

“It was just two years ago that U.S. military experts claimed that Iran was going to buy \$7 billion in military equipment. And they made different campaigns concerning this. At the end of the year, they announced that Iran hadn't done so. They attributed this failure to economic problems. [...] First of all, we didn't intend to make such large purchases, and on the other hand, our failure to make such purchases was not due to economic problems” (Los Angeles Times 15.11.1998).

⁸ Drawn by the author on the basis of the SIPRI data (2015) quoted in the table above.

In some cases, the decisions of the Iranian government were interpreted by analysts as stemming from lack of funds. Thus, in the early 1990s the Iranian Air Force was reportedly “unable to pay” \$100m to restore the ten Su-22 bombers it unexpectedly received from Iraq (Taghvaei 2014: 70). However, given the huge volumes of defence purchases by Tehran at the time, the decision can hardly be pinned to a lack of funds. More probably, the price was merely too high for restoring second-hand aircraft (at \$10m a plane). Two other factors make this decision seem more rational: at the time, Tehran still hoped to receive new planes from Russia, and the deployment of Su-22s would have added even more types of planes to Iran’s already motley fleet of combat aircraft, creating unnecessary complexity.

Iran's failed procurement deals also indirectly prove that Tehran could have purchased more than it eventually managed to. The considerable funds allocated for purchasing (post-)Soviet equipment and services in the 1990s remained partly unspent; this was particularly true for parts of deals on mechanised armoured vehicles, construction of naval infrastructure and probably aircraft. These allocations were foreseen by Tehran, and funds had most probably been set aside. The case of the cancelled S-300 SAM system in the 2000s is very similar.

There is considerable evidence that in its defence-related deals with Iran, Russia always required quick cash payments, meaning that Tehran had apparently allocated money for cancelled deals (*see the section of this thesis on financial mechanisms of deals with Iran*). Moreover, in some cases it probably even paid down payments – there is documentation proving as much for an S-300 in the late 2000s. There are reasons to believe that the same is true for Iran's deals with other post-Soviet countries: Ukraine and Belarus are also known to have used schemes involving no credit in their sales of weapons in these years.

In sum, although Iran's financial capacities may have vacillated, its willingness to procure equipment and related services for its armed forces and defence industries indicate that it could have afforded more than it actually ended up purchasing. Moreover, the general dynamics of its defence budget and unspent yet allocated funds reinforce this hypothesis. In the words of Iranian Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani, Iran failed to purchase more weapons “not due to economic problems” (Los Angeles Times 15.11.1998) but for completely different reasons. For the purposes of this study, Iran's financial capacities can be considered to have remained at a relatively high level in 1989-2015.

4.6. Iran's Defence Industries and Their Development

It is assumed that the dynamics of Iran-(F)SU defence-related cooperation were possibly also influenced by the development of Iran's defence industry. By producing equipment and providing necessary defence-related services at home, the Iranian government could mitigate its reliance on such equipment and services purchased abroad. The development of the domestic defence industry does not exclude the possible involvement of foreign states. While Iran developed its own R&D, production, maintenance, and overhaul capacities, it also sometimes involved foreign entities and experts – whether or not they were authorised by their respective governments. Cases in point include the establishment of assembly production of Soviet/Russian mechanised armoured vehicles and production of Ukrainian aircraft.

Such projects followed from Iran's policy of developing its domestic defence industries. Alternatively, in light of international pressure, some supplier countries may have preferred to transfer expertise, know-how and materials rather than ready-to-use items to Iran, to conceal at least parts of the cooperation.

At any rate, the level of development of domestic defence industries is a major factor determining the need of a given government to buy defence-related equipment and services abroad. Therefore, studying external, systemic level factors should be complemented by analysing the extent to which development of domestic defence industries influenced the situation as well by making a country self-sufficient in term of military equipment and defence-related services.

For the purposes of this study, a very general overview of changes in the capacities of Iran's defence industries will suffice to explain whether the development of domestic defence industries influenced Iran's defence-related cooperation with foreign nations. In addition, this section includes three case studies of major projects undertaken by Iran with regard to (post-)Soviet technology and equipment in order to achieve self-sufficiency. This will reveal how far Iran's defence industries advanced in mastering (post-)Soviet technological products.

The development of Iran's defence industries started before the revolution. Seven major projects involving both Iran and Western firms were underway by 1979. The most advanced included production of small arms and ammunition under a German license which made Iran self-sufficient in this field; and helicopter maintenance, logistics, support and production facilities which were built to a large extent following a contract with Bell

Helicopter by 1979. Less advanced projects included: co-production of a Rapier SAM with the British Aerospace Corporation; co-production of a TOW anti-tank missile and launcher with Emerson Electronics and Hughes; co-production of Maverick air-to-ground missiles with Hughes; establishment of a joint venture with GTE to produce electronic switching equipment for telecommunications in Iran; and establishment of a joint venture with Control Data Corporation to design, develop and manufacture computer terminal products (Neuman 1981: 140-141).

However, the Iranian defence industry had mostly a symbolic significance before the revolution and its development was disrupted when the Shah's government was toppled, as a consequence of which numerous officials fled the country and many contracts were cancelled. The Iraqi invasion in September 1980 made Tehran revisit its plans to develop a domestic arms industry. In particular, in 1360 AH (ca. 1981) Tehran established the Military Industries Organisation, later known as Defence Industries Organisation (DIO) (Vazarat-e defa' 21.01.1390).

After the 1979 Revolution, Iranian state officials regularly made public claims that the Iranian defence industries had achieved considerable success in manufacturing all kinds of military equipment. Although some of these claims can be confirmed, many were never corroborated.

During the war with Iraq, Iranians started producing 60mm mortars, then 81mm mortars and 120mm guns. By 1985 they had reverse-engineered a US-designed BGM-71 TOW anti-tank wire-guided missile system and probably did the same with the Soviet-designed Malyutka anti-tank missile system (Elamiyan 1392: 268-269, 293 and 320). However, Iran still had to buy artillery pieces for bigger calibres (such as 155mm and 175mm, which it started buying from North Korea since 1986). Missiles of its own production, which it claimed to have launched on 1 September 1986, were relatively unsophisticated versions of North Korean modifications of Scud missiles (*Ibid*: 351-352)

Thus, in 1987, Iran's Minister of the Revolutionary Guards Mohsen Rafiqhdoost publicly announced that Iranian defence industries “have access to advanced technology in military weaponry and can manufacture even such things as aircraft and surface-to-air missiles” (New York Times 13.10.1987). In 1988, Rafiqhdoost claimed that: “we accepted the [UN Security Council] Resolution [598] at a time when we had become self-sufficient in defence terms [*az nazar-e defai*], and to wage the war we no longer have to ask anyone for anything” (Elamiyan 1392: 399).

Even as the government proclaimed it would prioritise raising living standard,

reconstruction and economic development, in 1992 Iran's President Hashemi Rafsanjani announced self-sufficiency to be one of “the country's most urgent requirements” (FBIS-NES 22.06.1993).

In the early 1990s, the Defence Industries Organisation did produce some military items, especially small arms, artillery missiles and ballistic missiles. However, as far as more advanced systems were concerned, the DIO preferred to maintain and modify older imported systems. For instance, it was able to develop a mechanism to refuel F-14s and managed to convert a Bell 206A JetRanger into a Zafar 300 attack helicopter (Rathmell 1994).

This preference held true for many years, as until the mid-2010s Iranian defence industries continued to maintain and modernise the equipment they already had, demonstrating only a few significant developments and products which could be described as original. This was the case even with missile systems. Despite massive investments by Iran well into the 2010s, Tehran continued re-modelling Scud models and derivatives they acquired from North Korea and China.

After the Russian non-delivery of S-300 SAM system, Tehran claimed it was developing “an Iranian version of the S-300,” called Bavar 373. Brigadier General Farzad Esmayeeli, the Commander of Khatam ol-Anbia Air Defence Base, stated: “The flaws and defects of the [*Russian*] S-300 system have been removed in the indigenous version of the system” (Payvand Iran News 22.09.2011). The design was purportedly completed by autumn 2014 and although the veracity of these claims is unclear, the speed of this development may point to a leak of technical information from a country possessing the S-300.

Despite these announcements, the Iranian defence industry did not produce much sophisticated equipment by the end of the period under consideration. Indeed, even as far as small arms are concerned, Iran achieved only limited results: for years it has been manufacturing on licence the Heckler and Koch G3 battle rifle, Soviet AK-47/AKS (KLS/KLF) and AKMS (KLT), as well as the Chinese Type 80 rifle. However, this is not a significant achievement given the rather simple technologies involved in manufacturing them. Hence, this production failed to even meet the needs of the Iranian armed forces, and in 2016 Tehran even decided to import Russian AK-103, next-generation Kalashnikov assault rifles (Tasnim 06.08.2016).

Even more telling is Iran’s predicament with military warplanes parts: Iran badly needed these and tried to reverse-engineer and manufacture them on its own starting in the early 1980s. According to experts in U.S. law enforcement agencies, by 2007 Iran had managed

to reverse-engineer and produce only about 15 percent of the parts needed for the F-4, F-5 and F-14 military aircraft (The Washington Post 14.10.2007). These constituted the major fighting force of Iran's air force, and Tehran had been trying to keep them flight-ready at any cost since the beginning of the war with Iran in 1980. Thus, Tehran had to keep procuring these parts abroad illegally.

Three major projects illustrate the contradictory nature of developments in Iran's defence industry. Two of these, overhaul of submarines and military aircraft, were presented by Tehran as achievements brought about purely by indigenous defence industries. The third, licensed manufacturing of Antonov aircraft, involved extensive foreign participation.

4.6.1. Overhaul of Soviet- and Russian-Made Equipment

The ability to overhaul and upgrade military equipment within a country undoubtedly makes that country more independent. It has also been an important step in the establishment of national defence industries in many countries, such as Israel. So far, Iran has claimed to have attained this level of self-sufficiency with regard to two sophisticated types of military equipment: combat aircraft and diesel-electric submarines.

In 2000, both of these equipment types reached a critical phase after which they risked becoming useless for the country. According to some sources, because of problems with maintenance and overhaul in 2000, the share of mission-capable or at least airworthy aircraft and helicopters in the Iranian Air Force fell from an average level of 70 per cent to 45 per cent (Taghvaei 2014: 71). Likewise, by the mid-2000s Iran's submarine fleet was on the verge of exhausting its resources and exceeded limits of necessary service time between overhauls. In other words, without an urgent overhaul the Iranian submarine fleet in the late 2000s risked losing all its combat capacities.

In this context, Tehran not only had to upgrade the equipment of its armed forces, it risked losing their advanced components completely. It is no wonder the government tried so hard to solve the issue and claimed success on both accounts.

Aircraft. The Iranian army had deployed advanced military aircraft of various types since the 1960s, and by the late 1980s its defence industries had some experience in maintaining and overhauling many of them. This experience grew significantly during the war with Iraq, as Iranians had to keep their air force flying without resorting to external technical help.

Still, before the late 1980s this experience only involved maintenance and overhaul of Western-made planes. As a result, Iran faced considerable difficulties when it tried to

maintain even the former Iraqi planes it kept after 1991. Unlike the aircraft Iran bought from the USSR and Russia, Iran had to maintain and overhaul these on its own.

Expectedly, the most difficult to overhaul proved to be formerly Iraqi Soviet-made planes which Iran did not possess. Iran was able to restore and re-deploy the former Iraqi Su-22 fighter-bombers only after two decades of effort.

Perhaps the first programme to restore the Su-22 started when the Iranian government decided to retain former Iraqi aircraft. However, it was shut down as early as 1995, as no appropriately trained technical personnel could be found (Taghvaei 2014: 71). At the same time, some Iranian sources claimed that in the early AH 1370s (i.e., in the early 1990s) Iran was able to overhaul and commission formerly Iraqi-owned Mirage F-1 and Su-24 (Mashregh News 16.09.1394).

Meanwhile, other sources claim that it was only in 2007 that the Iranian Air Force Command authorised the domestic overhaul of the F-4E and Su-24MK. Both of these claims could be true, as in the early 1990s Iran possibly overhauled Sukhoi aircraft with extensive help from foreign, post-Soviet technicians, while in 2007 attempts were probably made to restore the planes without resorting to foreign assistance.

In 2008, Iranians also tried to restore Su-22 and refurbish its engine. However, the project was stopped when technical faults were detected. A major breakthrough in maintenance, overhaul and upgrade of Soviet- and Russian-made aircraft was achieved when the IRGC-affiliated company Pars Aviation managed to independently conduct the domestic overhaul of five Su-25Ks in 2011 and three Su-25UBKs in 2012. In 2013, the IRGC claimed that its units could overhaul Su-22, and announced plans to restore the first batch of these aircraft by the end of 2015 (Taghvaei 2014: 71). However, this was not achieved.

Despite claims about successful restorations of Soviet- and Russian-made aircraft, reports appeared in February 2016 that Iran might be interested in hiring Russian firms to overhaul and upgrade its MiG-29 and Su-24MK (Kommersant 15.02.2016).

It is clear that Iran developed considerable capacities to maintain, overhaul and upgrade its fleet of combat aircraft. However, even by the end of the period under consideration it was struggling to service the Soviet- and Russian-made planes.

Submarines. Of all its types of military equipment, the Iranian defence industries had perhaps the least experience with advanced warships, including submarines. Almost all major warships in the Iranian Navy in 1989-2015 were vessels built abroad, mostly in the West. The Shipbuilding Industrial Organisation of the Defence Ministry (*Sazman-e sanaye*

daryayi vazarat-e defa) was founded only in 2008 (AH 1387) (Saff 03.1393: 29).

Tehran acquired its first submarine from the US just before the 1979 revolution. Due to post-revolutionary chaos and radical policy changes within the Iranian government, it never deployed the vessel. However, at the end of the war with Iraq, Iran decided to develop its own submarine force in the Persian Gulf. It started with mini-submarines of apparently North Korean-design. On 29 August 1987, (7 Shahrivar AH 1366) the Iranian media reported on the deployment of the first submarine manufactured by Self-Sufficiency Industries of the IRGC (Elamiyan 1392: 366).

In 1992-1997, Iran received three Project 877 diesel-electric submarines from the USSR/Russia. These rather large vessels (with a submerged displacement of 3,000-3,950 tons full load) brought the Iranian Navy to a new level of combat capacities.

As Iranian officials pointed out, every seven to nine years these submarines needed a semi-fundamental overhaul [*taamirat-e nimeasasi*]⁹, after three semi-fundamental overhauls a fundamental overhaul shall be done (Yazdi 1391). As far as the first semi-fundamental overhaul was concerned, Iran ordered its submarines overhauled by Russians in the mid- to late 2000s. This means that the overhaul started much later than standard procedure. This could indicate that the vessels had been used less than expected by the manufacturer, who sets the standard terms. Talks on overhauls and contracts were conducted in 2005-2006 and apparently concerned all three vessels. These works were conducted, at Iran's insistence, in the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, probably starting with Tareq. Its overhaul began sometime before August 2007 (Voенно-promyshlennyi kuryer 12.06.2012).

The overhauls coincided with Tehran's escalating confrontation with a broad international coalition over its nuclear programme. In 2010, the Kremlin halted all relatively major projects of a defence-related nature with Iran. According to some reports, after the 2010 UN Security Council sanctions against Iran, Russians also stopped working on overhauls of Iran's submarines, and Iranians completed them on their own (Voennyi obozrevatel 29.05.2012).

Tehran's version of these events was completely different. Iranian officials claimed that they had failed to arrange the overhaul of its Project 877 submarines with Russia altogether. Hence, Iranian specialists set out to do it themselves. According to them, the overhaul works on the first submarine started in 2009 (Yazdi 1391).

The Deputy commander for technical affairs of the Iranian Army's Navy, Abbas Zamini,

⁹ Apparently, this term corresponds to the Russian term "middle-level overhaul" [srednii remont].

emphasised that the semi-fundamental overhaul of these submarines was carried out in Iran for the first time. For this reason, infrastructure had to be created and personnel trained. All this – creation of infrastructure, training and the overhaul – was allegedly completed by Iranians successfully in just three and a half years, with the works on the first submarine completed by the end of May 2012.

Iranian officials made even larger claims. In Zamini words:

“When sent to Russia, such submarines are repaired over the course of three years, and a thousand men work on the submarine 24 hours in three work shifts. Meanwhile, we, with a smaller number of workers doing repairs. Not only on one submarine but also on other small and large submarines (in total 25 vessels, as well as surface vessels), have completed this job in a reasonable and logical time-frame and with substantial savings regarding foreign exchange.” (Yazdi 1391)

During this overhaul, more than 100,000 parts of the 450,000 parts of the Tareq submarine were supposedly replaced by new components which were designed and manufactured by Iranian domestic manufacturers. Some of these replacements involved major components. Thus, Iran claimed to have installed its own Iranian-made sonar and batteries in place of Russian-made ones (Yazdi 1391). According to official reports, Iran upgraded anti-radar systems, wings, pneumatic systems, compressed air systems, pumps and sensors, telecommunication systems and propelling systems (Haaretz 18.09.2012).

These details are uniquely impressive and, if true, represent a huge leap forward for the Iranian defence industry. Tehran emphasised that Iran was the only country which performed such overhauls on submarines independently, without the Russian manufacturer. Furthermore, following the Tareq success it would carry out such works on its other submarines of the same class (Yazdi 1391).

In addition to carrying out the semi-fundamental overhaul of the Tareq, Iranian navy officials claimed to have performed “repairs approximating semi-fundamental overhauls with very interesting innovations” in 2009-2012 on two other submarines of the Project 877, Nuh and Yunes (Yazdi 1391).

These overhauled submarines were later sent on missions, and many experts noticed visible changes (such as the new cover of the vessels). If the overhauls were as serious as claimed, then Iran had succeeded in overhauling the warships on its own. Even if foreign specialists were involved, the fact the work took place on Iranian territory is a major achievement for Iran's defence industries.

There are, however, several details that undermine Tehran's claims. First, there is solid evidence that Russian firms participated – to various degrees – in some stages of the semi-fundamental overhaul of all three submarines. Moreover, at least for the Tareq submarine, overhaul and upgrade took up to seven years in total (Voenno-promyshlennyi kuryer 12.06.2012), out of which for the last three and a half years the works were conducted by Iranians. Secondly, the scale of the job – replacing roughly a quarter of the parts in a submarine with components not provided by the manufacturer of the vessel in a very short time span with fewer personnel and without previous experience – makes the claims seem fantastic.

This achievement seems especially strange given the absence of other such successes with regard to other equipment. Thirdly, in February 2016, Iranian officials reportedly voiced plans to ask Russia to overhaul submarines. This would not be necessary if Iran had indeed succeeded in overhauling and upgrading its submarines (Kommersant 15.02.2016). In other words, it remains questionable whether Iran really attained the capacity to perform submarine overhauls. There are reasons to assume that Iran was indeed able to complete semi-fundamental overhaul of one submarine, the Tareq, on which Russian specialists had already completed a significant part of the works. Iran had also made several innovations on two other submarines, but they never amounted to an overhaul and their scale was hugely exaggerated.

This makes sense given the context of the time: Iran was approaching the culmination of its confrontation with the West over its nuclear programme and such behaviour had become a pattern for Tehran. In recent decades, and especially in the late 2000s and early 2010s, Tehran made announcements on multiple occasions regarding its achievements in developing new military equipment and technologies which later proved partially or completely false. Cases in point are the development of a completely new fighter jet and an Iranian counterpart of S-300 SAM system.

4.6.2. Establishment of Aircraft Production

The Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (HESA) was founded in 1964 as the Iran Chopper Company. In 1975, through an international tender, it was handed over to the US Textron company which planned to construct a factory in Shahinshahr near Isfahan and supply necessary equipment and technology to manufacture Bell-214s of different configurations. However, when the 1979 Revolution occurred, the HESA facility was only 11% complete, Textron could not continue the project, and the project languished until

1985. In the next year, the HESA factory manufactured an unmanned plane (Iran International 2002b).

In response to the war with Iraq, other organisations also attempted to establish aircraft manufacture. In January 1988, the IRGC announced the forthcoming first flight of a military plane manufactured by Sepah. They started out producing a copy of the Pilatus PC-7 and wanted to copy the F-4 (Elamiyan 1392: 378). Unsurprisingly, these efforts failed, but Iran continued to look for aircraft technology, conducting initial talks on the matter with Romania in the late 1980s.

In 2002, Iran's Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani described the development of the aircraft industry as a component of Iran's national security strategy:

“In the wake of the Iraqi-imposed war, Iranian defense strategists decided to boost the country's aeronautic capabilities to bolster national defense and deterrence. Promotion of the aviation industry is thus a top priority at the ministry of defense [...] At the top of the agenda of Iran's defense program are unmanned aerial vehicles, tactical and training planes, and ballistic and cruise missiles. Aircraft manufacturing, the missile industry and air defense have many things in common. Progress in one field means the ministry can use its gains in the other two.” (Shamkhani 2002)

In 1995, Iran had to decide how to keep up its civil aviation and air force. Experts at the Ministries of Industries and Mines and Defence reviewed the country's needs and concluded that in the next quarter century Iran would need about 100 smaller 50- to 70-passenger prop jets, the same number of 100-passenger jets capable of flying at least 4,000 km, and about a dozen long-range jumbo jets (Iran International 2002a and 2002b).

The Iranian government announced a tender on the establishment of joint production of air planes in Iran. Nine countries allegedly sent their bids, including France, Brazil, Spain, Germany, Russia, Ukraine, China and Sweden (Iran International 2002b and 2003b). The government did not hide that it was taking into account the “present and future demands of civil and military sectors” when evaluating proposals. It was especially interested in producing “an aircraft that could both meet the demands of domestic passenger airlines, particularly in deprived areas, and accept logistic and marine patrol missions after making slight changes to back up the outdated C130s of its air force and P3Fs of its marine force” (Iran International 2001b).

Even official Iranian media outlets revealed that Tehran actually had little choice. In the tender it preferred the Spanish offer, despite its being five times more expensive than the

Ukrainian one.

“The Spanish aircraft would run on a US engine. First the Spanish company told Iran it had secured US approval to go ahead with talks with Iran. But when Iran was about to open a letter of credit for the contract, the Spanish side told us the US did not agree to the deal. They tried hard to press ahead with the deal but couldn’t pull it off. It was only then that we sealed the deal with Ukraine.” (Iran International 2002a).

The Spanish plane’s engine was not Iran’s only stumbling block: the Ukrainian aircraft on offer was still being designed. Tehran signed a deal for a plane that did not yet exist. Furthermore, this was not a popular solution, as the Iranian government-affiliated media conceded: “Negative signals mainly from Americans have rendered Oriental [Eastern bloc] products “unfavorable” in Iran” (Iran International 2002b).

Nevertheless, Iran strived to acquire not only new planes, but also technology “with no strings attached” (Iran International 2003b). The Ukrainian Antonov firm could supply it. At the time, it was struggling to find new markets following the collapse of the Soviet state, which had been guaranteeing state orders for decades. Tehran also appreciated that it would receive from Ukraine an aircraft which not only would be able to use primitive airfields but “could be readily converted into a multi-purpose flying military machine” (Iran International 2003c). Furthermore, Iran and Ukraine discussed the possible future establishment of manufacturing in Iran of further aircraft: An-148 and An-158 turbojet planes. This made the An-140 project (its Iranian modification was renamed IrAn-140) even more attractive for Tehran in terms of technology transfer.

In December 1995, Tehran and Kiev signed a \$193-million agreement which stipulated that 80 An-140 aeroplanes be manufactured in Iran over the next twenty years (Iran International 2002b). On the Iranian side, the project was implemented by HESA, an affiliate of the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics.

According to another source, a statement from HESA, the cost of the project was even higher and another Rls.630bn [*ca. \$360m according to the official exchange rate of the time*] had to be spent on top of the \$193 million. (Iran International 2001a). As Iran had no appropriate infrastructure or skilled personnel to implement the project, the agreement also stipulated that the Antonov firm supply not only technology but also production equipment, training, quality control and management systems (Iran International 2002c).

From the very beginning, the project was plagued with difficulties both on the Ukrainian and Iranian sides. For example, it was only after the deal was concluded that the first An-

140 was assembled in Ukraine and test flights carried out. Moreover, Iranian manufacturing facilities and other preconditions were poor. At the beginning of the joint project with Antonov, Iran had only just completed construction of the Isfahan HESA factory in 1995.

A high-level manager at Antonov, Georgi Kireev, complained about the lack of technological basis for manufacturing airplanes in Iran. In his words:

“At the institute [Antonov design bureau] we draw up designs and send them to the manufacturer. If the manufacturer has already manufactured a similar airplane, there will be no major problems making the aircraft at its plants. If the manufacturer has not been involved in production of such aircraft, experts at the plant [Antonov] can only take 50% of responsibility” (Iran International 2002c).

Tehran accused its Ukrainian partners of delaying completion of the design and postponing testing the first specimens and transferring licences [*gavahiname-ye taip*] of the aircraft. What's more, Tehran was accused of not providing sufficient loans needed to prepare facilities and purchase necessary equipment at the initial stages of the project, i.e., in 1995-1999 (Hamshahri 19.05.1393).

By early 1997, HESA had finalised basic drawings and received aircraft designs from Ukraine; personnel training had also started. The Iranian firm started designing the IRAN-140 and preparing laboratories and workshops (Iran International 2001b). Later, Iran claimed that in the final version of IrAn-140, 70% of the technology had been transferred from Antonov (namely, the Kharkiv Aerospace Research Institute) and the remaining 30% constituted domestic Iranian technology (Iran International 2004).

HESA also recruited more than 500 engineers and technicians, more than 250 of which went to be trained in Ukraine. The first batch of equipment arrived in Isfahan in early 1998. The assembly of the first aircraft in 1999 was celebrated by a visit to HESA from Iran's President Khatami.

In the early 2000s, several changes had to be made to different components of the IRAN-140 to increase its efficiency, make it more suitable for Iran's climate, and conform to new international standards. After that the first revised version of IRAN-140 was ready for systemic tests (Iran International 2001b).

The first aircraft assembled in Isfahan took off for its maiden flight in February 2001 in the presence of Iran's then Vice President Hassan Habibi and Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko. The second aircraft was assembled by HESA by the end of 2002.

The Iranian government was not only willing to invest considerable sums into an

uncompleted design, it also took measures to promote sales. Thus, in 2003, the government and parliament agreed to provide a \$50 million credit line to domestic commercial airlines to purchase the IrAn-140 aircraft. However, these measures were not implemented until the end of the period under consideration. By 2003, the Iranian Armed Forces ordered six planes to be deployed as tactical transport and naval patrol (Iran International 2003c).

However, by the middle of 2004, HESA was only able to manufacture three or four planes. Even an official Iranian statement concluded: “The project has currently come to a standstill due to the inattention of both sides” (Iran International 2004). As for problems on the Iranian side, in 2000-2004 [AH 1379-1383] low oil prices were blamed along with “failure to provide necessary loans” (probably the failure of the Iranian government to provide credit lines), so that HESA could not purchase the aircraft's parts (engine, systems and optics) from Ukraine. This inability to establish the continual and reliable production resulted in serious problems for sales (Hamshahri 19.05.1393).

A new attempt to revive the cooperation was made at a 2004 meeting of the Iran-Ukraine joint economic commission in Kyiv, when the two governments revisited discussions of a joint consortium for manufacturing planes or cars. This idea was raised for the first time during President Khatami's visit to Ukraine in 2002; the two sides planned to attract new participants into the consortium, in particular Indonesia, India and Pakistan.

In 2003, the head of the Iranian Parliament's Development Committee, Habibullah Esmailzadeh, set a target for a joint project with Antonov for production of around 100 units, including 30 units for 2006 (Iran International 2003a). By the end of 2010, however, only 14 planes were manufactured with no serious production activity known afterwards (probably one more plane was manufactured in 2011-5).

According to official claims, by 2014, the level of Iranian participation in manufacturing the aircraft reached 100%. The execution of practical depth of manufacturing [*ejra-ye omgh-e amali-ye sokht*] came to 70%. HESA has claimed that it continues to buy Ukrainian parts solely to save money although it could produce 100% of the aircraft itself (Hamshahri 19.05.1393).

After a series of technical irregularities and even accidents, Tehran eventually banned IRAN-140 from flying in Iran in 2014. HESA stopped manufacturing them and all aircraft were grounded. The project produced few results. It neither provided Iran with a satisfactory number of new aircraft, nor did it become a basis for launching assembly of further types of aircraft in Iran (An-148 and An-158).

The examples of projects cited above are not merely marginal endeavours by individual firms or organisations. The Iranian government supported and invested in them in order to develop its domestic defence industry. Even such a high-priority project, which enjoyed significant resources and was implemented over a long period of time, produced negligible results. In the case of the An-140, the Iranian government recognised the failure. In the two other cases analysed (maintenance and overhaul of aircraft and submarines), the Iranian organisations in charge of implementation claimed success. However, available data indicates that actual results were extremely limited compared to what was planned or claimed. Because of the direct involvement of the military, recognition of failure was probably unacceptable for Tehran.

After proclaiming its aim of self-sufficiency after the 1979 Revolution, Iran made numerous claims of success in developing its defence industry. However, if even the high-priority projects analysed here did not produce the desired results, one has every reason to doubt other claims.

Some achievements are certainly proven, such as the Iranian defence industry's success in independently maintaining, overhauling and upgrading its fleet of US aircraft, as well as its construction of some vessels on the basis of warships it had purchased before the 1979 Revolution. However, these achievements concerned Western equipment dating from before 1979, and they do not prove that Tehran is capable of modernising the respective parts of its armed forces and arms industries independently. It can thus be stated that Iran was unable to meet any of its major defence-related needs by developing its domestic industries. At the end of the period under consideration, Iran still needed external sources of defence-related equipment, services, and technologies as it did at the beginning of the period.

4.7. Conclusions

In the late 1980s to the early 2000s, Soviet and post-Soviet defence industries, as well as defence-related research and educational institutions and other entities and organisations, were eager to cooperate with any foreign country due to the desperate economic conditions of the time. The same was true for cooperation with Iran. When dealing with Tehran in this field, (F)SU nations always required it to pay immediately and avoided relying on loans or other mechanisms, making cooperation with Iran distinct from cooperation with other countries.

Legal uncertainty and underdeveloped export control systems provided opportunities for

cooperation with Iran outside formal channels and sometimes even completely outside the law. The difficult socio-economic conditions in which (post-)Soviet defence industries found themselves after the dismantling of the Soviet economic system, along with the difficulties they had in shaping government policy with regard to cooperation with Iran, drove them to act outside formal, government-controlled channels.

Nonetheless, however these informal deliveries are defined, their known volume remained limited. Moreover, as far as the modernisation of Iran's armed forces and defence industries were concerned, this form of cooperation was never able to replace cooperation via formal governments-controlled channels.

Collaboration via formal channels hugely surpassed defence-related cooperation via informal channels in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Only formal cooperation was able to provide Iran with considerable amounts and volumes of sophisticated defence-related goods and services. Known examples of informal deliveries show that even successful deliveries of separate items or pieces of technology information (like the Kh-55 cruise missile or Shkval/Hoot torpedo) did not guarantee usefulness for military purposes, and only stable government-backed cooperation over a longer period could help the recipient country absorb them.

The Antonov case seems to contradict this rule. However, the project's eventual demise began just when the Ukrainian government withdrew real support and started to back the project only in a perfunctory way. This series of events corresponds with the tenets of structural realism, which imply that governments played a major part in defence-related cooperation with Iran, while private initiatives were marginalised. This stems from the sensitive nature and significance of defence-related matters; governments constantly seek to control them. Moreover, given the problems Iran was trying to solve through this cooperation, such as modernisation of a military already armed with rather advanced weapons, it needed large-scale, stable and long-term partnerships with external sources of equipment, materials, technologies and expertise.

The analysis conducted in this Chapter proves that although the economic situation in Iran during the period under consideration was changing, Tehran possessed sufficient financial capacities to purchase new defence-related equipment, services, technologies and expertise. Defence expenditure volumes for a large part of this period were growing and had increased considerably by its end compared with its beginning. This is a testament to the willingness of the Iranian government to spend on national defence. Along with its willingness to invest resources and effort in risky projects (like the establishment of a joint

Iranian-Ukrainian enterprise manufacturing aircraft), this proves the will of Tehran to spend considerable funds and other resources on defence in a stable and strategically-minded way based on its longer-term vision of needs and opportunities.

Tehran's financial capacities allowed it to allocate for security even more money than it eventually managed to spend. Given the fact that (F)SU nations insisted that Iran pay quickly with cash or some essential commodities (like energy sources), there are good reasons to assume that the deals between Iran and (F)SU nations were usually based on a solid financial foundation from the beginning. Hence, if deals were disrupted, the funds remained. As such deals were numerous and some of them involved weighty transactions in monetary terms, Tehran must have been left with large sums allocated for defence-related purchases that remained unspent on purchasing defence-related products, technologies and services abroad.

At the same time, Iran failed to achieve serious self-sufficiency in terms of sophisticated defence-related equipment and services. Despite numerous claims to the contrary, the country still needs to import equipment, technologies and related services for almost all military services and purposes. Hence, it relied on defence-related imports throughout the entire period under consideration. Although Iran certainly developed its domestic defence industries, even priority projects sometimes failed (like Iranian-Ukrainian projects on aircraft manufacture). Furthermore, its ambitions and needs grew along with emerging challenges in the military sphere.

Analysis of domestic structural factors presented in this Chapter proves the validity of the structural realist approach to the issue of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. The main actors throughout the entire period under consideration were governments and government-controlled organisations and entities. In other words, focusing on governments as actors in this cooperation is completely justified, although Iran's interaction with other non-government actors in the (F)SU republics should be considered for context and because of the numerous political speculations surrounding the matter.

5. The Foreign Policies of (F)SU Nations and Iran and Their Defence-Related Cooperation

Defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations was integrated into the respective bilateral relations of the involved states. At the same time, bilateral relations developed in the context of the broader foreign relations of the countries involved, and not in isolation from the rest of the world.

This chapter shall test the hypothesis which posits the *existence of a correlation between the volume and intensity of defence-related cooperation of a given country with Iran and the degree of that country's involvement with the West and its allies*. To confirm or refute this hypothesis, it is necessary to understand how valuable the relations with Iran in general and defence-related cooperation in particular were for (F)SU states. After analysing this, the thesis proceeds to study the probable influence of the relations between (F)SU nations and third nations on (F)SU nations' defence-related cooperation with Iran.

Relations with Iran were not just another direction in the external relations of post-Soviet nations. They were a special case which involved the risk of tension and negative consequences in relations with third countries and groups of countries. In other words, post-Soviet nations needed good reasons to cooperate with Tehran, which throughout most of this time period challenged the West and some of its neighbours. It is assumed that post-Soviet nations would only risk working with Iran if serious gains from this cooperation were involved. These should be understood as large-scale cooperation and major projects. To assess the value of these bilateral relations, the chapter also considers how stable the cooperation and implementation of projects were.

After that, the thesis proceeds to consider defence-related interactions in the context of overall bilateral relations. The significance and role of defence-related cooperation in external relations of a country can vary depending on its situation. For the countries studied here, defence-related cooperation was important, albeit for different reasons for each.

For these (post-)Soviet nations it was a source of badly needed foreign currency that ensured the survival of entire branches of their economies, although some radical elements in their political or military elites may also have pursued their own political agendas in promoting cooperation with Iran. For Iran, the cooperation was a matter of basic national

security: it needed to procure the means to defend national independence and territorial integrity. Moreover, for a significant and influential part of the Iranian ruling establishment, it was a means to continue promoting the ideology of the Islamic revolution.

Security agencies undoubtedly influenced the foreign policies of all the countries under consideration here, although Iranian security agencies were probably more successful in this regard than their (F)SU counterparts. Jalal Dehghani Firouzabadi emphasises the role of security agencies, and especially the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), in Iran's foreign policy (Dehghani Firouzabadi 1389: 290-291).

That said, such assertions must be accepted with the utmost caution, as the role of the IRGC remains opaque. Due to the organisation's secretiveness, it tends to take on the role of *deus ex machina* in many analyses of Iranian domestic and foreign policies: it is an omnipotent factor which helps to conveniently explain anything the pundit wishes.

This section seeks to explore how the broader foreign policies and bilateral relations of Iran and the (F)SU evolved. This will allow us to compare their dynamics with the dynamics of defence-related cooperation, hence enabling us to draw conclusions on how political decisions have influenced defence-related cooperation, or vice versa. If there is a consistent correlation between the dynamics of bilateral relation in general and the dynamics of defence-related cooperation, then we can say that the latter could be built on some political, geopolitical or strategic grounds, although this does not have to be the case. Otherwise, in absence of such correlation, the driving force shall be sought in other spheres, primarily economic ones.

Alongside it, the logic of international relations generates the hypothesis that the growing entanglement of countries into international structures and integration with Western-dominated blocs and alliances, as well as establishment of closer relations with the most influential Western and Western allied countries, shall lead to a change in behaviour in the realm of defence-related cooperation which involves an element of confrontation with the West.

5.1. The International Context of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Nations

To understand which international circumstances, issues or factors were involved in defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations, it is helpful to examine this cooperation in the broader context of relations between particular countries, taking into account the (F)SU nations' relations with the West.

The reasons for the Iranian government to reach out to the Soviet Union and later post-Soviet countries are obvious: the situation Iran faced after the end of the war with Iraq was difficult and it needed foreign assistance to rebuild its economy and military. In addition, Tehran was worried about the activities of the US and its allies in its immediate neighbourhood, so that the Iranian political establishment celebrated the 1989 tour of Rafsanjani, the Chairman of the Iranian Parliament, to the USSR as “the first step on the road towards a ‘strategic partnership’ between Iran and its northern neighbour, which could counteract American strategic encirclement and blunt the Central Asian inroads of the US and its close ally, Turkey” (Clark 2014: 90).

It is much more difficult to judge why (F)SU nations cooperated with Iran, as their situation in most cases was very different. The only exception was Belarus, which in the late 1990s - early 2010s also found itself under pressure from the US and EU. Moreover, since the early 2000s it also faced pressure from ever more assertive Russian policies and had to look for new partners wherever it could.

Three major sets of factors are usually presented as the main forces driving this cooperation: political, economic and geopolitical, all three of which certainly interacted and influenced each other. This chapter shall consider that interaction by putting the issue of defence-related cooperation into the broader context of bilateral relations in order to better account for major issues that emerged in relations between Iran and (F)SU nations.

5.1.1. Soviet-Iranian Relations in the 1980s-1991

a) Slow Build-Up after 1979

Bilateral relations underwent serious changes after the 1979 revolution in Iran, but the relationship between the USSR and Iran remained largely intact. Despite proclaiming the slogan “Neither Eastern nor Western [*Orientation*],” Iran interacted with the Soviet Union and its allies throughout the 1980s. It never challenged the USSR as fiercely as it did the West, and moreover tried without much publicity to maintain and develop this relationship.

The beginning of a new, more dynamic epoch in Soviet-Iranian relations was characterised by analysts as “Iran's intensified *Ostpolitik*,” which started in 1985-1986 (Halbach 1989a: 27). This was triggered by Iran's wartime needs and reform processes in the Eastern bloc. The first moves by Tehran occurred even earlier. Thus, in 1984 or 1985, Iran's Minister of the Revolutionary Guards, Mohsen Rafiqdoost, at the order of Imam Khomeini, met with the Soviet ambassador to criticise the Kremlin for supporting Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and threaten to call on Soviet Muslims to rebel against Moscow if it continued to supply

Baghdad. According to Rafiqdoost, very soon he received the response that the Soviet leaders found his message “very good”, and the Soviet government was “of the same opinion that Saddam is American.” Moreover, Rafiqdoost was invited to visit the USSR, which he accepted on the condition that he receive authorisation from his superiors (Elamiyan 1392: 301). In April 1985 Rafiqdoost was involved in starting negotiations with the USSR on behalf of Iran concerning possible military procurements (Elamiyan 1392: 299).

Other sources also confirm that in 1987 – and maybe even earlier – Moscow extended invitations to Iran's leaders to visit the USSR. However, as the then chairman of the Iranian parliament commented later, the time was still not appropriate: “There was at the time the problem of Afghanistan, the Gulf war was ongoing, and we cannot say that the Soviet Union was then neutral [*in the Gulf war of Iran and Iraq*]” (Halbach 1989a: 20).

Nevertheless, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati's visit to the Soviet Union on 13-14 February 1987 presaged forthcoming changes in Tehran's approach.

b) Rapid Rise in 1989-1991

By the end of the war with Iraq, the Iranian ruling elites had started revising IRI foreign policies. In 1988, then Parliament Chairman Hashemi Rafsanjani put it thus: “Creating enemies for our country in order to attract revolutionary forces was the wrong method for our country. That is, some countries could be neutral [*bitafavat*] and we have made them confront us as enemies, or, at least, we did not do anything to attract them [*to ourselves*].” (Dehghani Firouzabadi 1389: 391)

Rapprochement with the USSR was caused by international circumstances beyond the pale of bilateral relations. On one hand, Iran, which faced severe and mounting international isolation and continued fighting Iraq, needed the USSR to improve its political, diplomatic and economic positions in general. In particular, Tehran needed numerous pieces of military equipment which it hoped to purchase from the Soviet Union and its allies. In addition, Tehran hoped to influence the Soviet relationship with its enemy in the ongoing war with Ba'athist Iraq, knowing that Soviet support had been valuable to Baghdad in pursuing its policies throughout many years.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union was interested in improving relations with its southern neighbour for several reasons: not only did it wish to maintain border security and develop economic links, it also needed Tehran's cooperation in its efforts to stabilise Afghanistan and withdraw Soviet troops from there. Soviet competition with the US also played a role, albeit a weak one. Immediately preceding the Soviet-Iranian rapprochement, Washington

had tried “a strategic opening to Iran” (Reagan 1987) by selling it weapons that caused a scandal known as the “Iran-Contra affair.” In November 1986 the affair was revealed in the Lebanese media for the first time and wide media coverage followed. The White House first and foremost explained the need to sell arms to Iran by citing the threat of the growing Soviet influence in Tehran (New York Times 20.03.1987).

Soviet-Iranian relations improved further after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, which started after the April 1988 Geneva Accords and was completed on 14 February 1989. In anticipation of this event, on 1 January 1989 Khomeini sent a letter to Gorbachev delivered on 3 January by deputy foreign minister Mohammad-Javad Larijani, ayatollah Abdollah Javadi-Amoli and Islamist activist Marzieh Hadidchi. Immediately after Khomeini’s issuing of a death sentence against Salman Rushdie – which caused a harsh reaction in the West – Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze travelled to Tehran on 25-27 February 1989 bringing Gorbachev's response. Unlike Western countries, the Soviet Union avoided discussing the Rushdie scandal with Tehran, and Shevardnadze was received by Khomeini himself – an unprecedented gesture. This series of interactions between Soviet and Iranian leaders was interpreted by some analysts as Khomeini “inviting the Soviet Union to an anti-Western coalition” (Halbach 1989a: 16).

These events were followed by visits from Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Hossein Lavasani (17 March 1989) and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati (30 March 1989) to Moscow. On 20-23 June 1989 Parliament Chairman Hashemi Rafsanjani visited the Soviet Union with a large delegation to sign a series of major agreements establishing a framework for cooperation between the two countries in various spheres. The documents concerning military cooperation were not publicised at the time, but the Declaration on the Principles of Bilateral Relations contained the following explicit wording: “The Soviet party is ready to cooperate with the Iranian party with regard to strengthening its defence capacities”.

Later on, then Iranian ambassador to Moscow Naser Noubari recalled that in a confidential meeting with Rafsanjani, Gorbachev offered the latter “whatever armaments” Iran wished to purchase on behalf of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

“He showed us a white sheet of paper at the bottom of which there were signatures of the 13 members of the Politburo; and said: ‘I had them all sign it, you need only to write what you need in the empty space of this paper ...’ In the night [after the meeting], the Iranian delegation was confused; even members of the military delegation did not know which Russian items they should order.” (Tarikh-e irani 14.09.1391)

Specific deals on the purchase of various pieces of military equipment were concluded later, in at least four rounds in 1989-1991. Immediately after Rafsanjani's visit, Western and Arab journalists, analysts and politicians speculated about Soviet-Iranian arms deals, but they remained secret for some time.

Among other important agreements then reached was a deal on resuming Iranian gas supplies to the southern regions of the Soviet Union, which had flowed for years before the 1979 Revolution.

In early August 1989 Shevardnadze went to Tehran to finalise these agreements and further consolidate Soviet influence. To this end, the Soviet government offered to mediate peace talks between Iran and Iraq.

After establishing such a close relationship with the Soviet Union, which Iran so badly needed given its international isolation, Tehran effectively collaborated with Moscow as the crisis in Soviet Azerbaijan broke out, also on the Iranian border. On 6-9 January, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Vaezi visited Moscow and received Soviet consent to ease the border control regime. This subsequently led to the signing of a border protocol on 15 February, opening a new border crossing at Julfa and opening the border for trucks. In a major breakthrough in September 1990 the Soviet Union started delivering the ordered fighter jets to Iran, and in October Tehran resumed its gas supplies to the Soviet Union.

In 1991, Iran's Foreign Minister visited Moscow and met with President Gorbachev twice: on 15 February and 26 November. If the first meeting dealt mostly with the Iraqi crisis, during the second one Velayati brought a message to Gorbachev from Iranian President Rafsanjani. Some analysts have argued that Tehran reacted cautiously to the collapse of the Soviet Union, preferring to maintain the best possible relations with the central government in Moscow and ensure deals were implemented rather than risk looking for partners in emerging independent republics (e.g., Rieck 1992: 82). It may also have had no other choice, as it failed to establish good contacts with Russian president Yeltsin. On 4 December 1991 Iran's Foreign Minister Velayati described the desperate situation he had found in Moscow for Iran's President Rafsanjani thus: "Gorbachev has become weak and has no power, Yeltsin is vain [*khom*] and arrogant" (Tarikh-e irani 14.09.1391)

Iranian officials took care not to offend Moscow's Union and the Russian Republic's governments while establishing relations with Soviet Caucasian and Central Asian republics. In September 1991, Velayati said that Iran "was waiting for the legal stages of independence to take place" before recognising the independence of former Soviet

republics. He effectively implied that Tehran was watching which way the developments would continue in the Soviet Union. Velayati added:

“The Islamic Republic does not intend to take advantage of the existing sensitive circumstances in the Soviet Union. We, as a neighbor of the Soviet Union, wish to see that their situation returns to normal as soon as possible. We respect whatever the people of that country as a whole desire, and the republics [of Central Asia] in particular. But we have no intention of provoking or speeding anything up.... We do not intend to dictate anything. We do not intend to contribute toward the further deterioration of the situation.” (Clark 2014: 89)

The complicated character of this situation led to an ambiguous approach from Iran. On one hand, the Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati went on a tour of the Soviet republics as early as 27 November – 3 December 1991, i.e., even before the Belavezha meeting on 8 December, whose resulting accords played a decisive role in the dissolution of the USSR. Other illustrative cases include visits by Azerbaijan's leader Mutalibov (16-19 August 1991) and Turkmenistan's leader Niyazov (8-9 October) to Tehran, as well as contacts between Iran and Ukraine on gas and oil, which also started very early, at any rate in 1991. On the other hand, Iran preferred to maintain relations with the Soviet Union's government until the very end, and hence befriended former Soviet republics very cautiously. A former Iranian Foreign Ministry official talking later to a researcher called them “Russia’s backyard...Iran moved in a way as not to disturb Russia [*which in that case seems to mean the Soviet Union rather than the Russian Federation government*]”. He also explained that Iranian diplomats worried that overly daring actions in relation to Soviet republics could disrupt the improvement of Iranian-Soviet relations which occurred after 1989 (Clark 2014: 89-90).

Hence, the Iranian government – while sending its officials to negotiate with the Soviet republics – was acting cautiously and pragmatically, accepting for example the victory in Tajikistan of the effectively pro-establishment presidential candidate Nabiev over the opposition – the latter was regarded as considerably closer to Iran's leadership. At the same time, Iran acknowledged the former Soviet republics later than many other countries of the world. This means that Iran tried to establish effective contacts before open and formalised relations, apparently trying to curry favour with Moscow. This was no easy undertaking given the existence at the time of a rivalry between the Union government of Gorbachev and the Russian Republic's government of Boris Yeltsin. At the time, Tehran definitely preferred to work with the Soviet government rather than Russia's leadership, which was

then towing a firm pro-Western line.

c) Soviet-Iranian Defence-Related Interaction and Foreign Policies in 1989-1991

Defence-related policy proved the major driver of Soviet-Iranian relations during their revival in the late 1980s. In November 1989 – November 1991, Iran concluded its five biggest deals with the Soviet Union on purchases of military equipment and related services for Iran's air force, navy and ground forces. The total value of these four deals in financial terms has been reported as high as \$5.1bn. The beginnings of this cooperation became widely known almost immediately, but first details about specific agreements became public only in 2001 (Kozyulin 2001). Iran's then ambassador to Moscow, Naser Noubari, assessed the volume of the general military treaty concluded in June 1989 at more than \$10bn (Tarikh-e irani 14.09.1391).

Deals were achieved to a large extent through high-level visits. The visit by Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze in February 1989 and the subsequent tour to the USSR by the Chairman of the Iranian Parliament Hashemi Rafsanjani in June 1989 were complemented by trips of military officials, including the commander of the Iranian Air Force Mansour Sattari in July 1991 (Hashim 1994: 33).

In these years the two nations worked to increase and diversify types of cooperation. This can be illustrated not only by deals and stable deliveries but also by the establishment of more constant channels for bilateral contacts. In 1991 the leading Soviet military-related export firm, VO Oboronexport, apparently for the first time ever assigned a permanent representative [*upolnomochennyi*] in Tehran (Usov 2005b: 2).

The motivations of Tehran and Moscow differed. The Soviet government wished to collaborate with Iran or at least earn its benevolent attitude regarding the stabilisation of an Afghan government affiliated with the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the country. Iran initially tried to convince Moscow to stop supporting Iraq. Later on, Tehran wanted a way out of the difficult situation it faced after its prolonged war with Iraq: it especially sought opportunities for economic reconstruction and improvement of its international standing. Last but not least, it wished to renovate its military equipment and increase its general defence capacities.

5.1.2. Russian-Iranian Relations in the 1990s

a) Inertia, 1992-1994

Relations between Iran and Russia, the legal successor to the Soviet Union, did not have an

easy start. First, Tehran had lost when it bet on the survival of the USSR and now had to readjust its strategy. Second, the government of the new Russia, led by Boris Yeltsin, committed itself to a pro-Western line in most of its policies.

According to an Iranian diplomat: “After the collapse of the USSR and emergence of the Russian Federation diplomatic relations between Iran and Russia could not be characterised as active. This was so because Russia's leadership and the Russian foreign ministry led by A.Kozyrev paid attention mostly to the US and Europe; they saw nothing interesting for Russia in relations with Iran, and probably with the entire East, until 1997” (Mahdiyan 2014: 97).

Third, Russian-Iranian relations were burdened not only by economic disputes which sometimes involved other former Soviet republics (e.g., in 1992 over payments for Iranian gas consumed mostly in Azerbaijan) but also by some strategic clashes and concerns harboured by Russia with regard to them (they are discussed in Chapter 6). The complicated dynamic of Russian and Iranian policies with regard to the crises in the post-Soviet South Caucasus (Karabakh) and Central Asia (Tajikistan), as well as the Balkan (Bosnia) and even Russia's own Northern Caucasus (Chechnya) in the early to mid-1990s gave Russian decision-makers and analysts many reasons to beware of Iran's presence and actions in all these regions. These issues will be considered in more details in the next chapter.

Complicating the situation, in 1992-1993 Russia was going through a period of political, economic and social turmoil which culminated in October 1993 in a violent confrontation between the executive and legislative branches of government. As a result, although at least some agreements and contracts concluded between Iran and the Soviet Union were being implemented (even such major deals as submarines), Tehran found it difficult to develop reliable political partnerships with the volatile and pro-Western regime in Moscow.

Since the very beginning of contacts with Iran in the last month of the existence of the Soviet Union, Russian leadership was reluctant to work with Tehran. According to recollections published later by the last Iranian ambassador to the Soviet Union, Nematollah Yazdi, during a visit from Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati to Moscow in November 1991 the administration of President Yeltsin – still *de jure* subordinated to the Union's leadership – imposed harsh protocol conditions on the Iranian side and displayed no particular desire to meet Velayati at all. The description of the encounter is very illustrative:

“Finally, an agreement was reached on a 20-minute meeting with Yeltsin with a three-person Iranian delegation. While the meeting with Gorbachev took place with a very large delegation and was longer, and we could easily get an appointment [to meet him], the meeting with Yeltsin had a different protocol., This behaviour demonstrated to us that they are effectively colluding [hashr o nashr dorand] with the Westerners [and hence dislike the Iranian regime]” (Tarikh-e irani 14.09.1391).

There were few official visits between Russia and Iran in 1992-1993, except for the visit by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Vaezi to Moscow on 16 October 1992 and a visit by Russia's Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev on 29-30 March 1993. At this time, the contacts involved discussions on the interaction between Iran and Russia at regional and international levels, and the two countries agreed to establish Russian-Iranian working groups on peace settlements in Nagorno-Karabakh, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, as well as discussions on the conflict in Bosnia (Mahdiyan 2014: 98).

Even to the first official multilateral talks on the legal status of the Caspian Sea and the establishment of an organisation of cooperation of Caspian nations, held on 17 February 1992 in Tehran, the Russian government sent only its Ambassador to Tehran Vladimir Gudev. Other participating nations were represented at a significantly higher level: Iran sent President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Turkmenistan was represented by President Saparmurat Niyazov, Azerbaijan by President Ayaz Mutalibov and Kazakhstan by Deputy Prime Minister A.Baykanov. This lack of high-level contacts between Iran and Russia stands in stark contrast to the very dynamic interaction between Iran and Ukraine in the same period in the early 1990s.

Although on 25 August 1992 Moscow and Tehran signed cooperation agreements on the peaceful use of nuclear energy and on the construction of nuclear power plants (NPP) in Iran, both documents were framework agreements with little specific content. At the time, Iran was looking for partners to revive its nuclear programme throughout the world, and probably had more specific arrangements with China. Even the agreement on the NPP did not yet mean transferring the Bushehr project to Russians. Instead, the two parties discussed, *inter alia*, constructing another NPP, and Tehran continued negotiating with Germans on completing the project they started under the Shah in the 1970s.

While Russian defence firms generally continued to implement their contracts with Tehran, in September 1994 Moscow suspended delivery of its third submarine to Iran and the construction of a tank assembly plant because of Iran's delays in paying \$120m for earlier arms deliveries (PIR-Tsentr 2008: 2).

b) Rise, 1995-2000

Tehran succeeded in reinvigorating its interaction with Russia only starting in 1995; nuclear energy would become the backbone of this cooperation in the following years. On 5-8 January 1995, the Russian Minister for Nuclear Energy, Viktor Mikhailov, visited Iran to sign an agreement on completing the construction of the first reactor in Bushehr. This immediately triggered fierce American criticism and the Kremlin appears to have made some concessions. In particular, the so called Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum may be regarded as Moscow's concession to Washington in exchange for the opportunity to implement its nuclear project in Iran. This document, signed on 30 June 1995, required that Russia complete all concluded defence-related contracts by the end of 1999.

Iran and Russia continued to pursue active interaction on the nuclear issue, which apparently facilitated relations in other fields. On 24 November 1995, Nuclear Energy Minister Mikhailov again travelled to Tehran. On 29 December 1995, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Economic Relations Minister Oleg Davydov, visited Iran and signed an Intergovernmental Protocol on Settlement of Mutual Financial Claims.

According to the document, Iran agreed to pay its debts to Russia related to conventional arms deliveries: namely, to deliver oil worth \$230m and pay \$150m in currency (Pir-Tsentr 2008: 4). When on 5-7 March 1996 Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati paid a visit to Moscow, both Iranian and Russian officials spoke about a “strategic partnership” and “turning point” in bilateral relations.

On 23 December 1996, the foreign ministers of Iran and Russia (Velayati and Primakov, respectively) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the Sphere of Export Control when Primakov visited Tehran. At the same time, Primakov supported the Iranian position that maintaining security in the Persian Gulf should be solely up to the countries in the region, saying that Russia was striving to bring Iran back into the international community (Rieck 1997: 84).

Relations continued improving in the following years. On 11-12 April 1997 an Iranian delegation led by the Chairman of the Iranian Parliament Ali Akbar Nategh-Nuri visited Moscow. Nategh-Nuri, who was rumoured to be on the verge of winning the forthcoming presidential election, was also received by Russia's president Yeltsin. On 14 April 1997 Iran and Russia signed an agreement on trade and economic cooperation.

To further placate American concerns over the Bushehr project, in September 1997 Russian Nuclear Energy Minister Mikhailov proposed organising a joint Russian-American control system on the Bushehr NPP. Iran categorically rejected this idea.

Russia also had to coordinate cooperation on gas extraction, which the US likewise opposed. The problem of US opposition worsened after 1996, when US Congress adopted the so-called D'Amato-Kennedy Bill (ILSA, the *Iran and Libya Sanctions Act*), which imposed sanctions on investments in Iran. On 28 September 1997, the French oil concern Total concluded a \$2bn-large agreement with Iran on development of the Iranian natural gas field South Pars, with the participation of the Russian firm Gazprom and the Malaysian firm Petronas, which each had a 30% in the deal. Here Washington did not want to cause a confrontation with France and did not apply sanctions.

Contacts over nuclear cooperation continued, although they slackened 1997-1998; on 15 April 1998 the head of Iran's Organisation for Nuclear Energy came to Saint Petersburg. Moscow reacted to accusations, primarily from the US and Israel, of collaborating with Iran over sensitive military projects, above all ballistic and cruise missiles, by reducing visible interactions. This growing Russian caution was noticed in Tehran, whose top officials even spoke on the matter publicly (such as in 1998), albeit in rather ambiguous terms (Vlasov 1998).

A new flurry of contacts came in 1999; it was once again probably initiated by the Iranian side, which might have seen new opportunities to develop relations with Russia after Moscow's relations with the West deteriorated over the conflict in Kosovo. On 11-14 January 1999, the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Hassan Rouhani came to Russia to discuss bilateral military cooperation and international security. On 29 June – 1 July 1999, Iran's Minister of Internal Affairs Musavi Lori came to Moscow. On 15 September, Iran and Russia signed an agreement on scientific and technical cooperation. On 24-25 October 1999, a delegation of the Russian Federal Border Service headed by K.V. Totski visited Iran to discuss drug trafficking and transborder criminality. On 28 November 1999, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov visited Iran to discuss the fight against international terrorism, proliferation of WMD and the situation in the North Caucasus and Afghanistan. On 6-7 December 1999, a delegation of the Organisation of Islamic Conference headed by Iranian Foreign Minister Kharrazi visited Moscow.

This wave of contacts continued in 2000, probably supported by Iranian hopes that the new Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who came to the fore of Russian politics in autumn 1999 and became acting president in January 2000, might review the previous government's deals with the US over reduction of defence-related cooperation with Iran. On 13-14 January 2000, Secretary of the High National Security Council Rouhani visited Moscow. On 3 August 2000, the Minister of Energy of Iran Habibollah Bitaraf visited Moscow. On

16-19 October 2000, the Secretary of Russia's Security Council Sergei Ivanov visited Iran. Tehran found some grounds for optimism as the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy Concept, adopted in June 2000, emphasised the importance of developing relations with Iran, a great improvement over the previous doctrine, which explicitly named Iran as a threat. In addition, Moscow was protesting against the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum, which specifically dealt with defence-related cooperation with Iran, more and more loudly. Nevertheless, despite these promising signs for Tehran, under the new president the Russian government continued to follow the same policy of limiting cooperation with Tehran. For instance, in 21 September 2000 Russia suspended the sale of laser and other electro-physical equipment to Iran under US pressure after the issue was raised at the highest level. Washington believed the equipment in question could have been used by Tehran to advance its nuclear programme (New York Times 19.09.2000 & 20.09.2000). Later on, this sale was cancelled altogether.

c) Russian-Iranian defence-related interaction and foreign policy in the 1990s

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the Russian Federation was recognised as the continuing legal entity: the sole successor state of the Soviet Union. It thus inherited multiple defence-related deals with Iran. This transmission of deals to the Russian Federation cannot be explained simply by the fact that most of the Soviet arms industry and arms designing organisations had been located in Soviet Russian Republic. Many organisations, including those producing the items transferred under the 1989-1991 Soviet-Iranian agreements, were located outside Russia (such as the Vympel R-27 missiles which were in Ukraine).

The collapse of the Soviet Union affected defence-related cooperation with Iran by disrupting transfers for some time, but it was never completely halted. Unlike Russian-Iranian relations in general, which remained in a precarious state for several years, Russian-Iranian cooperation in the defence sphere continued with minimal interruption after Soviet-Iranian collaboration ended. However, the context of this cooperation changed dramatically. First, Russia had to adapt its Iranian policy to its general pro-Western political course. Secondly, Iran received additional opportunities to obtain Soviet military equipment in other post-Soviet countries, which it utilised.

US government officials claimed that even the collapse of the USSR failed to interrupt shipments of Soviet arms to Iran (Chicago Tribune 19.01.1992). This fact cannot be dismissed as merely inertia or as a result of political chaos. After all, Tehran convinced

Yeltsin's Russian government very rapidly to confirm most deals concluded by the Soviet government. As early as January 1992, according to US intelligence, newly independent Russia was continuing implementation of Soviet-era weapons deals with Tehran and appeared "determined to carry through with a \$5 billion sales program" arranged between the USSR and Iran three years earlier (Chicago Tribune 24.01.1992).

Among these confirmed contracts was the sale to Iran of three submarines along with training for their crew. That initially Soviet deal was confirmed by the new Russian government at some point before the beginning of June 1992 (Seay 1992). Two points are especially remarkable here: the very early confirmation of the deal – at an apex for relations between Moscow and the West and at a time of uneasy general relations between Moscow and Tehran.

From the viewpoint of strategic capacities, the transfer of submarines to Iran became arguably one of the most important – if not the most important – deals between Moscow and Tehran at the time. It provided Iran with the means to seriously threaten communications of global significance to the south of its territory, and hence threaten the interests of the US and other Western countries, as well as their allies.

If such sensitive deals were confirmed by the Russian government in the early 1990s, it is no wonder that less sensitive transfers went ahead smoothly in 1992-1995 regardless of the general political situation. As a matter of fact, no major weapons deals between Russia and Iran are known to have been cancelled in 1992-1995. US officials openly discussed the Russian arms supplies to Iran as inevitable. In the words of CIA Director Robert Gates, the proliferation of arms from the post-Soviet nations was "one of our greatest concerns" yet the Russians "see it very much in their interest to be able to sell some of these weapons for hard currency, and we would expect to see that" (Chicago Tribune 24.01.1992).

In May 1995, during US President Clinton's visit to Moscow, President Yeltsin of Russia promised to complete all previously signed contracts with Iran involving military equipment by the end of 1999 and not to conclude new contracts of the kind from then on. This agreement was formalised as the so-called Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum of Understanding of 30 June 1995.

According to the document, which was expected to remain confidential, Russia had to complete the implementation of existing defence-related contracts with Iran by the end of December 1999 and not to conclude new contracts. The US committed itself to preventing the proliferation of US weapons to areas neighbouring Russia, as well as developing military technical cooperation with subsequent joint activities in the global arms market

together with Moscow. The disruption of deliveries are valued at ca. \$3bn, and Yeltsin approved a comprehensive plan on development of military technical cooperation with Iran as early as 1997.

5.1.3. Russian-Iranian Relations in the 2000s

a) Cautious Continuation of Cooperation in 2001-2009 and Decline in 2010-2012

On the surface, the end of 2000 and 2001 seemed to indicate a change in bilateral relationships. Indeed, on 23 November 2000 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ivanov sent US Secretary of State Albright a notice that Russia would henceforth not consider itself committed to the obligations stipulated by the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum. This was followed by a visit by Russian Defence Minister Igor Ivanov to Iran in 27 December 2000, and on 12-15 March 2001 Iranian President Khatami paid a visit to Russia. In early October 2001 Iranian Defence Minister Shamkhani also came to Russia. Iran and Russia signed some general agreements, such as the Treaty on Foundations of Mutual Relations and Principles of Cooperation (12 March 2001) and the Intergovernmental Framework Agreement on Military-Technical Cooperation (2 October).

These contacts are frequently described as a kind of qualitative advancement of Russian-Iranian developments. The following moments make them look less impressive. First, despite Russia's more assertive rhetoric in international politics, this time Moscow actually faced less risk contacting Tehran. In the 1990s, Yeltsin's Russia was working with an isolated Tehran that had problems in relations not only with the US but also with European countries. In the early 2000s, Putin's Russia was dealing with a Tehran which had significantly improved its relations with European countries and was trying to repair its relationship with the US following Khatami's and his reformist faction's rise to power (in presidential, parliamentary and key local councils elections).

Secondly, in the early 2000s, despite having signed framework agreements and widely-publicising official contacts, Moscow did not dare to conclude deals comparable with the 1990s, when the Kremlin had negotiated to complete a series of major deals that had remained since Soviet times and launched a new seminal project on nuclear energy. Projects such as Gas OPEC or Transport Corridor North-South (*considered in Chapter 6*) never really took off. Thus, an Iranian diplomat involved in supporting Russian-Iranian relations complained that in the early 2000s: "a new foreign policy oriented to the West began to emerge in Russia" (Mahdiyani 2014: 107).

Furthermore, Russia proved incapable of meeting most Iranian needs Tehran had hoped to

satisfy by turning to Moscow,

“At the beginning, many of the leading experts, politicians and economists in Iran did not agree that Russia was leaning toward the West and believed that the Iranian-Russian relations should be similar to those between Iran and the European countries: that is, Russian companies should come to Iran investing in Iran's major projects. However, Russian companies had no such capacities. Russia itself at this stage badly needed [investments].” (Ibid: 107)

Beginning in the mid-2000s, cooperation with Iran became an ever more risky undertaking because of possible negative externalities related to responses from third countries. By the beginning of 2007, Moscow decided to make concessions to the US with regard to Iran. On 7 June 2007 at the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Russian President Putin proposed that the Gabala Radar Station in Azerbaijan, operated by Russian armed forces, be integrated into the European component of missile defence system constructed by the US, allegedly to defend Europe against missile attacks from the Middle East, and namely from Iran. Russia was willing to operate the radar station jointly with Americans as long as the latter renounce their plans to install radars for a missile defence system in Eastern Europe.

When Washington declined the offer, pointing out that the Gabala Radar Station was old and obsolete, in July 2007 Moscow also offered to provide the Americans with data from the newest Russian radar station in Armavir, located in the Krasnodar Province of Russia. The Armavir station was then still under construction and would be put online only in June 2013, but it could also collect relevant data on Iran's missile launches.

Despite these explicitly unfriendly gestures from the Kremlin, Tehran tried hard to maintain relations with Moscow. Chairman of the Iranian Parliament Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel announced that Iran did not perceive Putin's offer of the Gabala Radar Station to the Americans as “Moscow's taking a hostile position towards Iran” and even called into question whether the offer was made, “given the good neighbourly relations between Russia and Iran” (Newsru.com. 13.06.2007).

On 16 October 2007, Putin travelled to Tehran; this represented the last peak in bilateral relations in the 2000s. His visit attracted considerable international attention as the first visit of a Russian president to Iran, although Moscow demonstrated caution and chose the format of a working visit – as opposed to an official visit. The working visit lasted only one day and was combined with Putin's participation in the 2nd Caspian Summit.

Putin called for a rejection of any use of force in the region and reminded Iran that “Russia

is the only country that is helping Iran to implement its nuclear programme in a peaceful manner.” Together with Ahmadinejad, he implied the Kremlin's opposition to the deployment of external, non-Caspian countries' military forces (meaning above all the US) in the countries of the Caspian region (New York Times 17.10.2007). At the same time, he openly refused to tell his Iranian hosts when Russia would complete the construction of the reactor in Bushehr (Zygar' 2007). A period of tensions over Iran's nuclear programme followed, and Moscow increasingly cooperated with the international community in putting pressure on Tehran to reveal and suspend its nuclear efforts. The role of the crisis over nuclear programme in Russian-Iranian relations and its influence over defence-related cooperation is considered in Chapter 8.

The relations between Moscow and Tehran in the late 2000s and early 2010s were minimal. On 7 June 2012, during a SCO summit in Beijing, Russian President Putin met with his Iranian counterpart, Mahmud Ahmadinejad; the former declared Russia's interest in developing ties to Iran.

However, on the list of issues to be discussed with Iran, Putin put the Iranian nuclear programme in the first place. Since the late 2000s Russia had started to cooperate with the West in pressuring Tehran to limit its nuclear programme. The other two issues on Putin's list included development of economic relations and the legal status of the Caspian Sea. The issue of economic cooperation with Iran was again linked to removing sanctions against Tehran, as for the time being, i.e., as long as the sanctions remained effective, Iran could only cooperate with Russia through burdensome economic schemes – such as barter for trade or replacement of the international banking system for settlements. Finally, on the issue of the Caspian Sea, Moscow had little to offer Tehran, as it had already resolved the issues concerning delimitation of the Russian sector of the Caspian Sea through bilateral talks.

Although the Iranian government tried to maintain close relations with Moscow by giving contracts in Iran to giant Russian corporations known to have influence within the Kremlin, this method failed in the early 2010s. Iran's engagement with Lukoil and Gazprom provides two illustrative cases.

In March 2010, the Russian company Lukoil halted work on the Anaran oilfield, which it had been developing together with Norwegian Statoil since 2003. Lukoil had already reported problems in implementation of the project because of American sanctions in 2007, and in 2010 the company had to stop working in Iran because of the risk of being punished under US laws (Nezavisimaya gazeta 25.03.2010).

Another leading Russian oil and gas company, Gazprom, was able to stay in Iran longer. It was invited by the Iranian government in the late 2000s to replace Western companies extracting Iranian gas and oil. On 13 July 2008, Gazprom signed an agreement to that effect with the Iranian National Oil Company, and in November 2008 Gazprom announced that together with the Iranian National Oil Company and Qatar Liquefied Gas Company Limited it was planning to implement a project to transport Iranian gas to Qatar and liquefy it there for subsequent export. In November 2009, Gazprom Neft, the oil unit of Gazprom, and the Iranian National Oil Company signed a memorandum of understanding on joint study and development of oil fields.

However, these plans produced scanty results, and in September-October 2011 Gazprom was forced out of the oil project in Iran. The project on liquefying Iranian gas in Qatar was not implemented either. Reports on the specific reasons for halting Russia oil and gas projects in Iran were varied. For example, Lukoil apparently gave up its Iran-based projects because the company owned assets in the US and preferred to take precautions rather than continue the project in Iran (Nezavisimaya gazeta 25.03.2010). That is one plausible interpretation.

There is, however, an alternative opinion on the issue. Some Russian experts, like Vitaly Kryukov of the Small Letters consulting firm, point out that most exploration projects conducted abroad by Russian oil and gas companies were unprofitable, and in many cases projects were launched for political reasons: to boost relations between the countries (Kommersant 09.01.2017). Whatever details led Moscow to take this decision, one thing is clear: oil and gas projects with Iran never became a truly functioning channel of bilateral relations between Iran and post-Soviet nations (and Russia in particular).

Meanwhile, Russia's trade in commodities with Iran almost tripled in the 2000s (*please refer to the table in Appendix 6*). Since 2007 its annual volume reliably comprised more than \$3bn, although with a positive balance for Russia. Still, these volumes made up a very small part of Russia's foreign trade, and they were minimal in comparison with other countries similar to Iran in terms of size and geographical location. For instance, Russia's trade with neighbouring Turkey was almost ten times larger; even after a significant decline it made up in \$22bn and \$26bn in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

b) Russian-Iranian defence-related interaction and foreign policy in the 2000s

Two major events can be seen to mark the beginning a new period in Russo-Iranian defence-related cooperation. On 3 November 2000, Russia officially informed the US that beginning on 1 December 2000 it would not abide by the terms of the 1995 Gore-

Chernomyrdin Memorandum. Formally, it used the publication of confidential details of the document during the 2000 US presidential campaign as a pretext. Tehran, however, used that occasion to officially cancel orders for the remaining assembly sets for submarines and T-72S and BMP-2 tanks. It allegedly limited its purchases to some aircraft, spare parts and ammunition.

On 12-15 March 2001, President Khatami of Iran paid a visit to Russia which included negotiations on defence-related cooperation issues. As a result of this visit, Moscow also established the Intergovernmental Commission on Military Technical Cooperation with Tehran, which provided a more stable platform for organisation of defence-related interaction. This move was probably intended to boost bilateral defence-related cooperation after the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum.

There is abundant evidence that despite announcements of the repeal of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum, Moscow effectively continued to limit its defence-related cooperation with Tehran. A case in point is the visit by Iranian Defence Minister Shamkhani to Russia in October 2001. It was reported that documents signed during this visit would ensure that Russia's arms sale to Iran would exceed \$300 million yearly. The equipment discussed for sale included: Su-27 and Su-30 jet fighters, Kamov Ka-50 and Ka-52 helicopters, and T-90 tanks. Some misspelled "T-82"¹⁰ tanks were also mentioned, and further agreements were also reportedly being drafted (Iran Report 02.10.2001). Almost none of these arms were actually exported to Iran until the end of the period under consideration.

The consequences of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum lasted well into the 2000s and became a symbol of the destruction of the Russian defence industries. Thus, for Russia, according to Director of the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST) Ruslan Pukhov, the later agreement on the supply of S-300 to Iran meant throwing the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum into the bin; by concluding the agreement on S-300 "[Moscow] stopped doing Washington's bidding [smotret' v rot Washingtonu]" (Poroskov 2007).

In 2010, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, known as a long-time friend and close ally of Vladimir Putin, emphasised that in legal terms there were no impediments for selling arms like the S-300 to Tehran. Therefore, "as far as the implementation [*of the S-300 contract*] is concerned, that is [...] a political decision." He added that the US had no problems with Russian-Iranian cooperation (Vesti.ru. 11.06.2010). This US position comes

¹⁰ Most probably T-72 tanks were meant here.

as no surprise, given the fact that by that time Russia was taking a harsher line with regard to Iran, delaying such sensitive projects as the delivery of the S-300 and completion of the Bushehr NPP.

A dramatic disruption to Russian-Iranian relations in every field occurred when on 22 September 2010 Russian President Dmitrii Medvedev signed the Decree “On Measures to Be Taken to Implement the Resolution of the UN Security Council 1929” of 9 June 2010. The most well-known example of the effects of this decree on Russian-Iranian defence cooperation was the non-delivery of S-300 SAM systems to Iran, which were immediately stopped. However, it was not only the SAM systems that were affected; numerous other deliveries and deals even on relatively unsophisticated types of arms and equipment were disrupted as well, e.g., anti-tank weapons (Tulskii oruzheinyi... 2010).

5.1.4. Russian-Iranian Relations in the 2010s

a) An Uptick in 2013

An uptick in Russian-Iranian relations began in late 2013. Tehran initiated this rapprochement with Moscow and had more to gain from it. As the Kremlin was following a cautious line, a visit by Ahmadinejad to Russia on 1-2 July 2013 was organised under the pretext of attending the 2nd GECF Summit in Moscow. Limiting the format of bilateral meetings this way was a pattern for Moscow which started in the late 2000s: for instance, in 2007 Putin visited Tehran as part of a larger event.

Despite the changes in Iran's leadership due to the decline of the Principalist faction [*osulgarayan*], Moscow kept its distance to see how negotiations over the Iranian nuclear programme would proceed. Putin met with the new Iranian president Rouhani only on the side-lines of international events: the SCO Summit in Bishkek (September 2013), the 4th Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia held in Shanghai (May 2014), the SCO Summit in Dushanbe (September 2014) and the 4th Caspian Summit in Astrakhan (September 2014).

These meeting formats were indicative of problems in Russian-Iranian interaction. Thus, insiders in the Russian Foreign Ministry reported that the meeting of Putin and Rouhani in Shanghai in May 2014 “ended with no results”, and Putin's visit to Iran in August 2013 was cancelled at Iran's request (Kozhanov 2014). In August 2013 the Russian President obliged to go on a tour around the Caspian Sea, visiting only select ports and meeting the presidents of their respective countries. Putin wished to come to the Iranian Caspian port of Enzeli to meet Rouhani. He adamantly refused to go to Tehran to have a meeting with

Iran's Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ali Khamenei as Tehran demanded (Vestnik Kavkaza 01.08.2013).

In other words, Tehran wanted a full-fledged visit by Putin while Moscow wanted to stress that Putin would visit Iran only as part of a larger tour and that such meetings did not constitute an official visit to Iran. Moscow apparently prevailed in this dispute. Despite the serious rapprochement between Russia and Iran in autumn 2015 driven by their joint effort to support the Syrian government, Russian President Putin came to Tehran on 23 November 2015 for only a brief visit as part of his participation in the 3rd GECF Summit.

In addition to this restraint in official contacts, from 2011 to 2015 bilateral trade between Iran and Russia was falling by almost a third every year, and Russia kept very severe restrictions on the arms trade with Iran until 2015.

Nonetheless, it would be correct to describe the period from 2013 until at least about 2015 as a time of waxing Russian-Iranian relations. Moscow responded positively to Tehran's ever more fruitful negotiations with Western countries and international agencies about its nuclear programme. The de-escalation of the Iranian nuclear crisis was the primary reason for Moscow to reinvigorate its relations with the country, albeit very slowly and with sporadic setbacks. After all, deals with Iran were becoming a less risky endeavour.

The developments of the so-called Arab Spring disrupted Moscow's efforts to develop relations with Middle Eastern competitors and opponents of Iran, especially the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Contacts between the latter and Russia were growing in the 2000s, but Russia's support for the Syrian government halted or at least delayed further rapprochement. As an insider in Russia's Foreign Ministry noted: “[a]fter 2011, it took about two years before the Russian Federation could finally resume effective discussion of bilateral, regional and international issues with Saudi Arabia” (Kozhanov 2014). This made Iran more valuable for Moscow as one of its few remaining partners in the region.

During this period, the Iranian government also overcame the grievances it held with regard to the Kremlin's – however reserved – support or at least acceptance of the international isolation imposed on Iran in previous years. If in the late 2000s and early 2010s Tehran sometimes displayed its dissatisfaction with Russian policies, angered Moscow by open defiance of international arrangements, and even defied Russian demands from Iran, by 2013 the Iranian government had become more patient with the Kremlin and attentive to its wishes.

Moscow responded to these overtures very cautiously and slowly. By the beginning of 2014, the Russian government had agreed to launch arguably its most important economic deal with Tehran. In January 2014, Reuters news agency reported that Iran and Russia were negotiating a barter deal according to which Russia would purchase about 25 million tons of Iranian oil a year in exchange for equipment and other goods over the next two-three years. The value of this deal was assessed at \$1.5bn a month (Reuters 10.01.2014).

If implemented, this deal would have eased the international pressure on Iran to negotiate over its nuclear programme. In particular, Tehran would have been able to increase its oil exports, which had then fallen after major importers of Iranian oil decided to turn to other sources for oil supplies. Moreover, Iran would be able to circumvent its exclusion from the international financial system and get new equipment. The US government responded immediately, warning both parties that such a deal would be unacceptable.

When Moscow took a harsher stance toward Iran in 2011, bilateral trade was immediately affected (*see the table in the Annex 6*). The annual volume fell from almost \$3.8bn in 2011 (the highest ever volume of Russian-Iranian trade) to about \$1.6bn in 2013 and 2014. As a result, trade with Iran became significantly smaller even than trade with the much smaller Israel, which in the early 2010s exceeded \$3bn.

b) Russian-Iranian defence-related interaction and foreign policy in 2010-2015

A few months after the disruption of the S-300 deal as a result of President Medvedev's decree of 22 September 2010, Moscow proposed to deliver another air defence system to Iran in a very short time: an additional Tor-M1E. However, Tehran declined. Moscow subsequently proposed to deliver an Antey-2500 S-300VM, but Tehran still insisted on implementing the 2007 contract. At the same time, the Russian government significantly reduced all defence-related cooperation with Iran. At this point Tehran had nothing to lose any more and filed a lawsuit against the Russian state arms export agency Rosoboronexport in 2010 with the International Court of Arbitration for non-compliance with the contract on S-300s.

In February 2012, after a meeting with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin, who was responsible for defence industries in the Russian government, Iran's Ambassador Sajadi announced that both sides had agreed to restore military-technical cooperation within an international legal framework (RIA Novosti 08.02.2012). This can be interpreted as meaning that the two parties were waiting for the removal of international limitations regarding Iran.

In January 2013, Russian Internal Affairs Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev visited Tehran. Together with his Iranian colleague Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, they noted that security problems facing Iran and Russia are similar in nature and stem from the same sources: e.g., criminal and extremist activities originating in Central Asia. These talks, however, did not bring about any changes in the frozen defence-related cooperation between Moscow and Tehran.

This situation started to change as Tehran demonstrated willingness to make a deal with the international community over its nuclear programme. In October 2013, the commander-in-chief of Russia's Air Force, Viktor Bondarev, visited Iran to discuss cooperation in military pilot training, maintenance of air force equipment, and missile and radar systems. In May 2014, Iranian Defence Minister Hossein Dehghan visited Moscow and together with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu announced their countries' intention to develop military and military-technical cooperation taking into account the emerging global political situation.

These increasing contacts proceeded in parallel with Iran's improvement of relations with the West. They finally resulted in the signing on 20 January 2015 of an agreement on military cooperation between Russia and Iran. during a visit by Russia's Defence Minister Shoigu to Tehran. By autumn 2015, Russia and Iran had effectively become allies in the Syrian civil war, although how closely they coordinated their efforts remains unclear.

5.1.5. Ukraine-Iranian Relations and Their International Context

a) Origins and Rapid Rise in 1992-1997

The contacts between Kyiv and Tehran started at the end of 1991, i.e., even before the formal establishment of diplomatic relations. On 2 January 1992, Ukraine and Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Economic and Industrial Cooperation, and on 7 January the two countries and Azerbaijan concluded a trilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of oil and gas.

Iran established diplomatic relations with Kyiv on 22 January 1992 when it sent its Foreign Minister to Ukraine. From here relations developed very dynamically. On 28-29 January 1992, Iran's Oil Minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh came to Kyiv and established an Iranian embassy. During the same visit, Ukraine and Iran signed an agreement on the delivery of four million tons of petroleum and three billion cubic metres of gas to Ukraine yearly. In return, Kyiv was to supply Tehran with petroleum products, chemicals, construction materials, machinery and machine tools (Smolansky 1995: 70-71). In February 1992, a

Ukrainian delegation headed by Deputy Prime Minister Konstyantyn Masyk headed to Tehran and on 25-26 April 1992 Ukraine's President Leonid Kravchuk paid a visit to Iran as well.

Very soon, it became clear that despite strong political support for Ukrainian-Iranian energy projects, there were serious obstacles to implementing them. First, Kyiv had very little hard currency, and paying Iran with Ukrainian commodities on a barter basis made trade more complicated and took more time and effort to arrange. Second, Ukraine had very little infrastructure to engage in petroleum and natural gas trade with Iran. It lacked pipelines, own tankers, and terminals etc. Third, given its refining capacities, Ukraine itself could buy only relatively small volumes of Iranian petroleum, which did not justify all the efforts and investments needed to arrange for their delivery and did not resolve the fundamental problem of Ukraine dependence on Russia in the sphere of energy resources (above all, gas).

Even during the very first phases of cooperation, various media sources, in particular Reuters, reported that Ukraine could pay its deal with Iran partly by supplying Tehran with weapons worth \$7bn over the course of four years. The office of the Ukrainian Prime Minister denied these allegations, emphasising that at the final stage of negotiations with Iran, “the option of paying for a pipeline with arms has not even been suggested” (Izvestiya 11.02.1992).

As early as March 1992, the Deputy Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament, Volodymyr Hrynov, announced Kyiv's intent to export arms, with the caveat that they would not end up in conflict zones and would not be transferred to countries which are not parties to appropriate international agreements and conventions. A few months later, the head of the Near and Middle East Department of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, Viktor Nahaichuk, made a more cautious statement that “Ukraine does not want to base its policy [*in the Middle East*] on the arms trade” (Smolansky 1996: 174).

By May 1992, Iranian officials had announced the establishment of a joint venture with Ukraine and Azerbaijan to construct a gas pipeline from Iran to Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine and further to Europe (Megalli 1992). In July, Ukraine signed another agreement with Iran and Azerbaijan concerning preparations for construction of the gas pipeline, although Ukraine apparently had no funds to spend on the project (Smolansky 1995: 72).

In October 1992, the Ukrainian government opened an embassy in Tehran but kept its level of representation there minimal: until December 1993 only a chargé d'affaires was posted.

On 10-12 February 1993, Iran's Oil Minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh visited Kyiv for the second time, this time also discussing oil supplies for Ukraine. He told Ukrainian Parliament Speaker Ivan Plyusch that Iran could provide Ukraine with oil on a barter basis and announced that Russia was already supplying Tehran with weapons, implying that the arms were supplied on a barter basis. Aghazadeh offered Ukraine a similar deal. Plyusch publicly announced that Kyiv would not sell weapons and would offer Tehran other commodities instead (UPI 11.02.1993). During Aghazadeh's visit, the two countries concluded a new agreement on supplying Ukraine with four million tons of petroleum in 1993, to be paid with sugar and wheat. Kyiv also offered to pay for Iranian deliveries with metal. According to some plans, as early as 1993 the trade volume of "Ukrainian metal for Iranian petroleum" was to reach \$7bn (Kalashnikova 1994).

However, these plans never materialised, even though Iranians even offered to deliver petroleum with their own tankers. Nevertheless, Kyiv demonstrated its interest in dealing with Iran in every way possible. For instance, on 10-14 May 1993, the Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament Ivan Plyushch visited Iran. Given the role of parliament in the Ukrainian political system in the 1990s, this should be considered a contact at the highest level.

Reassurances provided by Ukrainian officials that their deals with Tehran did not involve sensitive arms deals did not suffice to appease the West. In December 1993, the US State Department urged Ukraine to display restraint in arms trade and in particular to avoid selling missiles to Iran. Washington did not specify which missiles it meant (Izvestiya 14.12.1993). Ukraine was generally considered to have all the components of a full-fledged missile programmes at its disposition – both for cruise and ballistic missiles.

On 17-18 April 1994, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Zlenko visited Tehran. He described the previous situation and the discussions of delivery of Iranian oil to Ukraine as a stalemate. Allegedly, the problems were caused by instability in Azerbaijan and Turkey's refusal to let oil tankers pass the Straits. The negotiations also dealt with the sale of Ukrainian-made Antonov military transport aircraft and spare parts for them (Kalashnikova 1994). Ukraine and Iran also established a joint commission on economic cooperation.

Long before the official tender on establishing aircraft production in Iran was won by Ukraine's Antonov firm, on 5-8 December 1994, the Chairman of Iran's Majles Nategh Nouri came to Kyiv. According to Iranian radio, Ukraine was going to "assist the IRI in establishing aircraft manufacturing industries in return for fuel from Iran" (The Echo of Iran, December 1994: 8).

In January 1995, Ukrainian foreign minister Udovenko listed the regional priorities of Ukrainian foreign policy as follows: 1) Russia and the CIS, 2) the West, 3) the Persian Gulf countries (including Iran), 3) the Asia-Pacific region, 4) Latin America, 5) Africa. In April 1995, however, he admitted that Ukraine's presence in the Middle East remained “limited” (Smolansky 1996: 171). Relations between Ukraine and Iran were intensive during this period. On 4-5 March 1996 the Foreign Minister of Iran came to Kyiv. On 12-13 May the First Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine went to Tehran, on 19-24 May the Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine visited Iran to participate in the first meeting of an Intergovernmental Ukrainian-Iranian joint commission on economic and trade cooperation. On 24-27 June 1996, the Foreign minister of Iran travelled to Ukraine.

Ukrainian governments had hardly any comprehensive vision of foreign policy and even individual officials themselves sometimes pursued contradictory aims. At the beginning of the Kuchma administration, Foreign Minister Udovenko spoke of a potential “triple alliance” among Ukraine, Israel, and the United States. This remained a general concept without many details, but Udovenko emphasised that he did not mean a military or economic alliance directed against “third countries.” Later on, during a visit to Israel in November 1996, President Kuchma also mooted a “strategic partnership” among Kyiv, Tel Aviv and Washington.

The Ukrainian media drew parallels: just as Israel was America's “strategic partner” in the Middle East, Ukraine, pursuing a pro-US line in its foreign policy, could become Washington's “strategic partner” in Eurasia. While Israel reportedly supported this vision, the US government declined to comment (Smolansky 1996: 182). Such plans were certainly problematic when combined with cooperation with Tehran.

Nevertheless, Tehran and Kyiv continued to look for ways to advance joint projects. On 2-9 February 1997 Iran's Minister of Industry visited Ukraine. On 8-10 June 1997 the Foreign Minister of Iran came to Ukraine. Ukraine and Iran concluded another agreement on cooperation in the field of oil and gas: Kyiv was to deliver “equipment and machinery” for Iran's gas and oil industry and send Ukrainian experts to assist Tehran in constructing pipelines (Smolansky 1996: 174).

In 1998, after meeting US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Ukrainian President Kuchma forced the cancellation of a contract on the delivery of two turbines for the Bushehr nuclear power plant which the Ukrainian firm Turboatom was fulfilling. The disruption of the turbine deal caused a break in high-level contacts. Thus, the Iranian Foreign Minister postponed his planned June 1998 visit to Ukraine and the next high-level

visit occurred as late as December 1999, when the Ukrainian Foreign Minister came to Tehran.

Iran – however aggrieved – decided to downplay the problems caused by the Ukrainian failure to deliver the equipment for Bushehr. Thus, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi shifted the responsibility:

“Iran now has an agreement with Russia according to which the Russians participate in the Bushehr project, in particular producing turbines for it. As far as Ukraine is concerned, it had obligations to Russia with regards to manufacturing this equipment. Hence, Russia is a party to our agreement and is obliged to manufacture equipment for this plant.” (Vytyahy z pres-konferentsii... 2001) At the time, Tehran was desperate for any foreign partners it could find and had too much at stake in its relations with Kyiv (such as potential and actual deals on aircraft and mechanised armoured vehicles).

b) First Crisis 1998-2000

As Ukraine became increasingly integrated with the West (*to be discussed in detail in the second part of this Chapter*) its foreign policy became less diversified and contradictory. In April 1998, Borys Tarasyuk was appointed Ukrainian foreign minister. He described his mission as pursuing the policy of President Kuchma, which aimed for integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures but emphasised Ukraine's interests, saying “Everything else ... is a matter of secondary importance.” (Smolansky 1996: 171) Tarasyuk actively worked to move the priorities of Ukrainian foreign policy away from Russia and other post-Soviet states and towards the West .

While foreign minister Tarasyuk strived to bring the country closer to the West, Leonid Derkach, the Head of the Security Service of Ukraine in 1998–2001, was the most prominent supporter of defence-related cooperation with any countries, including Iran. He was accused of playing a key role in supplying weapons to Iran (as well as Iraq). A former officer of Ukrainian security service, Mykola Melnychenko, even claimed that Derkach visited Iran and Iraq in the spring of 2000 to explore their needs with regards to military equipment. Derkach allegedly used these illegal arms deals to earn money for political activity in Ukraine. Derkach himself denied the accusations (Bozhok 2002).

The contacts in these years prove that Kyiv still had interest in cooperation with Tehran. Thus, on 20-21 December 1999 the Foreign Minister of Ukraine Borys Tarasyuk – known for his pro-Western views – visited Iran. On 28-29 August 2000 the second meeting of the Intergovernmental Ukrainian-Iranian joint commission on economic and trade cooperation

took place in Kyiv.

Even experts at the Ukrainian Olexander Razumkov Centre for Economic and Political Studies (the Razumkov Centre), an influential institution known to promote Euroatlantic integration, argued for cooperation with countries of the so called “risk group.” As a leading expert of the Centre Volodymyr Saprykin insisted:

“Development of economic cooperation and collaboration with such countries as Libya, Iran and Iraq corresponds with the national interests of Ukraine and shall be regarded as a transit stage in build-up of the Ukrainian state or rather a stage of [its] economic (energy) survival. ... [this cooperation] will allow Ukraine to overcome the serious isolation of its economy from global markets, especially from [the markets] of energy resource and products of the energy machine-building industry [enerhetychne mashynobuduvannya].” (Saprykin 2000)

Admitting that it would not be easy to enter the markets of these countries, Saprykin pointed out some ways of solving the problem, namely by resorting to military technical cooperation while adhering to effective international restrictions (Saprykin 2000).

Perhaps an even greater source of grief than pressure from third parties, Ukrainian-Iranian cooperation suffered from implementation problems. In 1996, Oles Smolansky summarised: “Iran tops the list of Ukraine's Middle Eastern partners in terms of the number of agreements signed as well as of agreements that have not been implemented” (Smolansky 1996: 180).

Tehran seems to have possessed much more will and resolve to implement energy projects with Ukraine. In February 1993, Aghazadeh pointed out that because of Ukraine's “procrastination,” an agreement he signed with Kiev in 1992 to supply Ukraine with 28 million barrels of oil was not implemented. The implementation of the agreement on a gas pipeline traversing Iran-Azerbaijan-Ukraine-Europe, according to Aghazadeh, was not started because Kiev had failed to fulfil its commitments. Ukrainian Parliament Speaker Ivan Plyushch essentially accepted this criticism, admitting that his government “did not adopt a decision on the payment of Ukraine's contribution to the joint gas supply venture” (UPI 11.02.1993).

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Anatoliy Kinakh commented in May 1996 that many Ukrainian-Iranian agreements “remained just paperwork with no visible signs of [ever] being implemented.” Kinakh explained this situation by pointing to “predominantly bureaucratic obstacles” and “blamed faulty and imperfect mechanisms for implementing

the agreements and the involved government officials' inadequate skills for the deplorable situation.” (Smolansky 1996: 180)

This situation did not change significantly with time. In 2000, the first Ukrainian ambassador to Tehran, Ivan Maidan (1994-1996, chargé d'affaires in 1992-1993), admitted that Ukraine had not used Iranian credit loans offered by Tehran to facilitate Iranian oil and gas deliveries, and failed to attract considerable investments from Iran (Maidan 2000: 81).

Likewise, in 1998, the Kyiv-based daily *Den'* noted no real advances in ensuring deliveries of Iranian oil and gas, despite high hopes. Among the reasons for this, the Iranian ambassador to Kyiv mentioned high transportation tariffs, which led to increased prices for Iranian oil and gas and prevented the project from being implemented. “Our countries have not lost interest in the project. But we must admit: as long as Ukraine can get energy resources from a source we know [*Russia*] and get them cheap, your interest in another pipe – purchasing fuel from Iran or whoever else in the Middle East – will remain frozen” (*Den'* 03.09.1998). Remarkably, most of the commentators avoided talking about the Western – and especially US – objections to such projects.

c) Recovery in 2001-2005

By the early 2000s, Ukraine's achievements in trade with Iran were impressive: it consistently boasted a surplus trade balance. Between 2001 and 2006 the trade volume between Iran and Ukraine more than tripled, going from \$165m to almost \$595m. This was the result of a new flurry of high-level contacts after the previous break.

In 2002, the semi-official magazine *Iran International* wrote: “Of all the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Iran seems to have the closest ties with Ukraine.” It referred to the numerous high-level visits and growing trade and economic projects (*Iran International* 2002e).

During the visit of Iran's President Mohammad Khatami to Ukraine in October 2002, the two countries signed bilateral trade and health care agreements, an anti-drug trafficking memorandum, and discussed the further development of projects in the aviation and energy sectors, including future transfer of Iranian gas to Europe and Ukraine's assistance in developing Iran's nuclear power capacity.

At the time, several major Ukrainian-Iranian projects were being implemented. In addition to the establishment of assembly production of An-140 aircraft in Iran, the Ukrainian company Motor Sich began cooperation on manufacturing aircraft engines with the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (HESA). The Ukrainian company Azovimpeks

cooperated with Isfahan Steel Mill and other Iranian firms on supplies of coking equipment to Iran. There were also collaborative projects on manufacturing and repairing gas compressors in Iran, as well as other equipment for oil, gas, and petrochemical industries. Certainly the most ambitious projects dealt with attempts to bring Iranian gas and oil into Ukraine and Eastern Europe. By the early 2000s, Ukraine's Derzhnaftohazprom and AT Ukrimpex conducted calculations which led the government to choose a gas transportation route going from Iran to Europe through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine. Founding documents were drafted for a gas company named "Iran-Ukr-Aze", whose goal was to construct a transcontinental pipeline using foreign investments. The project and possible routes were discussed with interested actors. At some stage, Kyiv concluded that the most promising route would be Iran-Armenia-Georgia-Black Sea-Ukraine-Europe. In 2000, the Kyiv-based Scientific Research Institute Transhaz conducted a feasibility study for this route. The pipeline was to transport about 40bcm a year, out of which 10bcm would go to consumers in Ukraine (with a planned increase to 15bcm).

Iranian gas supplies were discussed constantly in Ukrainian politics in the early 2000s. The recommendations of parliamentary hearings (titled Ukraine's Energy Strategy until 2030 and approved by a decision of the Verkhovna Rada on 24 May 2001) named Iran as a promising partner for Ukraine with regards to diversification of gas supplies. The issue of gas supplies was mentioned in Article 4 of the Treaty on Fundamentals of Mutual Relations and Principles of Cooperation between Ukraine and Iran of 15 October 2002.

The general tenets of Ukrainian-Iranian energy cooperation were determined in July 2003 at the first meeting of the Joint Committee on Energy Cooperation, when the respective ministries of the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This document declared Ukraine's willingness to buy Iranian natural gas in a volume of 10-15bcm a year and provided for the study of opportunities for transit of Iranian gas through Ukraine to Europe (Borysfen Intel 2015).

On 30-31 January 2001, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi visited Kyiv. He discussed projects with Ukrainian officials regarding aircraft and engine manufacture, oil and gas, metallurgy and transportation. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoli Zlenko commented that they focused on "obligatory" [*neukhylnе*] implementation of agreements (Vytyahy z pres-konferentsii... 2001). This remark revealed the fundamental problem in Ukrainian-Iranian relations.

The intensity of the contacts remained high throughout the remaining time of Kuchma's presidential term, in 2001-2004. In 2001, the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Chairman of the

Verkhovna Rada, and Foreign Minister of Ukraine visited Tehran, indicating Kyiv's serious efforts to overcome the consequences of earlier tensions with Iran and revive relations (which apparently were not limited to disruption of the Bushehr contract but also cancellation or poor implementation of some other projects, perhaps involving defence-industry firms like the Malyshev factory).

In 2002, Kyiv finally succeeded in this endeavour, as evidenced by the growth of contacts and trade volume. That same year also saw visits to Iran from the first deputy prime minister of Ukraine (including the third meeting of the Intergovernmental Ukrainian-Iranian Joint Commission on Economic and Trade Cooperation) and a visit from the Iranian president to Ukraine. In 2003, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister visited Iran and the Chairman of the Iranian parliament visited Ukraine. In 2004 Iran's Foreign Minister, Minister of Science, Research and Technologies, and Minister of Culture visited Ukraine and the fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Ukrainian-Iranian joint commission on economic and trade cooperation, as well as the second meeting of the commission on transportation took place in Kyiv; the Justice Minister of Ukraine also travelled to Iran.

In the winter of 2004-2005, Ukraine went through the so-called Orange Revolution. Immediately after his ascent to power, Viktor Yushchenko proclaimed his intent to coordinate Ukraine's strategic energy policy with the EU. At the same time, the new government insisted that Ukraine become a corridor for various gas transportation routes, especially from Iran and the Caspian region. In March 2005 the first meeting of the Ukrainian-Iranian Committee on Energy Cooperation took place in Kyiv.

In March 2005, Tehran sent the Iranian President's Special Representative for the Caspian and head of the CIS Department of the Iranian MFA, Mehdi Safari, to meet with President Yushchenko. According to official statements, they discussed possible cooperation with regards to construction of gas pipelines, the oil sector, shipbuilding, space technology and the aircraft industry. President Yushchenko even planned to visit Iran in the first half of 2005 (Lenta.ru 24.02.2005).

Ukrainian-Iranian trade in commodities in the early and mid-2000s grew, but in a very unstable way, with annual volume twice doubling and decreasing by half (*see the table on Ukrainian-Iranian trade in Annex 7*). It reached its highest level – almost \$600m – in 2005. Given Ukraine's need to balance its foreign trade deficit and its large positive surplus in trade with Iran, Kyiv regarded trade with Tehran as promising, albeit unstable and still a secondary destination for Ukrainian exports.

d) Stagnation and Decline in 2006-2015

The ascent to power in Iran of Ahmadinejad and his Principalist faction adversely affected political relations with Ukraine along with some projects (especially on oil and gas). After Ahmadinejad became president in August 2005, contacts between Iran and Ukraine fell to a lower level. While the reasons for this require deeper study, the following version seems the most likely: the provocative policies of Ahmadinejad and the Principalists caused a massive negative reaction among the Western political establishment, especially in the US. The Ukrainian political elites who came to power after the 2004 Orange Revolution strived to get closer to the West and responded to Western dissatisfaction with regards to the new Iranian government by lowering the level and reducing the intensity of their contacts with Tehran.

Thus, in September 2006, the foreign ministers of Ukraine and Iran met during the UN General Assembly session. In October 2006 and November 2007 second and third meetings of the Committee on Trade Regimes took place in Kyiv and Tehran respectively. In January 2008 the Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine met the Iranian Foreign Minister at the inauguration of the Georgian president in Tbilisi.

Other sporadic and mostly inconclusive contacts demonstrated mostly Tehran's desire to maintain relations with Kyiv. These included: a visit from a delegation of the Ukrainian National TV Company (September 2010), consultations of the directors of political departments of the foreign ministries of Iran and Ukraine (June 2011), the participation of Anatoli Hrytsenko, the Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence of the Verkhovna Rada in a conference on terrorism in Tehran (June 2011), consultations of the directors of territorial departments of the foreign ministries of Iran and Ukraine in Kyiv (December 2011), a visit by the Ukrainian Culture Minister Kulinyak (May 2012), and a visit by the deputy foreign minister of Iran Behrouz Kamalvandi (June 2012). The only relatively significant visit – by a Ukrainian parliamentary delegation headed by deputy chairman of the Verkhovna Rada M. Tomenko (10-14 July 2011) also failed to lead to any breakthrough in bilateral relations.

Ukrainian-Iranian trade in commodities started to grow rapidly in 2007 (*see the table on Ukrainian-Iranian trade in the Annex 7*). Starting from \$558m in 2007, it reached its record height – more than \$1.2bn – in 2012, characterised by a large surplus for Ukraine. Nevertheless, even in such fruitful years for bilateral trade, it remained unstable, with the annual volume vacillating, albeit considerably less than in the early 2000s. This volume, an accomplishment for Ukraine, nevertheless fell in 2013-2015 to just \$560m. Among all three (F)SU countries under consideration here, trade with Iran had probably the greatest

importance for Ukraine in the late 2000s and early 2010s. That said, Iran was never a partner of critical importance even for Kyiv.

e) Ukrainian-Iranian defence-related interaction and foreign policies

There is little information on contacts between defence or security officials of Ukraine and Iran. However, the very first official visit of President Leonid Kravchuk to Iran on 25-26 April 1992 involved several issues of defence-related cooperation. The delegation included, inter alia, Anatoli Lobov, the deputy minister of machine-building, defence industries and conversion. Listing areas of cooperation which could be interesting for Iran, Kuchma mentioned cooperation in the scientific and technological, metallurgic and military-technical spheres. Negotiations also involved discussing and drafting an agreement on cooperation in the military-technical sphere (Ablazov 2012). Whether the agreement was ever signed remains unknown.

That said, in the 1990s – most probably 1994-98 – negotiations between the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the Ministry of Intelligence and National Security of Iran did take place. The talks involved an Iranian Intelligence Minister and two high-level SBU officials: Oleksandr Sharkov and Vasyl Krutov (Nikulenko 2014). Sharkov is known to be involved in the arms-trade business.

The Ukrainian government actively sought ways to use arms to pay for other necessary commodities. For instance, in the early 1990s, Ukraine reportedly agreed to provide Iran with 50 MIG-29 fighter jets, 200 tanks, and eight state-of-the-art P-270 Moskit anti-ship missiles. Before the deal, Ukrainian officials conceded that Kyiv could pay for Iranian oil with arms, although Ivan Plyushch, Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament, stated that Ukraine would pay with commodities rather than weapons.

Afterwards, government officials “made a series of contradictory and ambiguous comments about whether weapons had been sold to Iran.” For instance, Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk said in December 1993: “I can't say there are grounds for distress over massive sales of arms to Iran. But rumours of anti-ship missiles for the Iranian navy are not true” (Mycio and Efron 1994; Izvestiya 12.05.1993). In fact, some of the listed weapons probably were transferred, although definitely not the aircraft, and they were probably paid by Tehran with money rather than oil.

In May 2000, a delegation of Iranian military and security officials paid a visit to Motorsich and Yuzhmash in Zaporizhia and Dnipropetrovsk, respectively. Ukrainian government agencies refused to comment on this even after receiving a request from

members of the national parliament (Matyshenko 2011).

Some Ukrainian sources claimed that the Iranian delegation visiting Ukraine in May 2000 featured Iranian Intelligence Minister Ali Younesi at the invitation of his Ukrainian counterpart Leonid Derkach. The Iranian delegation visited, *inter alia*, Motor Sich in Zaporizzhya. Ukraine's contacts with Iran and Iraq at that time even triggered an immediate reaction from the US, and on 18 June 2000 the Deputy Director of the CIA came to Kyiv and asked for a meeting with Derkach. As covert records from the working room of the Ukrainian president revealed, Derkach informed the President that the CIA wanted to discuss the exact nature of Ukraine's deals with Iraq and Iran (Ukraina kriminalnaya 12.07.2002).

5.1.6. Belarusian-Iranian Relations and Their International Context

a) Beginning and Slow Development in 1993-1996

The Iranian policy towards Belarus never held much importance for Tehran and pursued rather limited goals. Some Iranian officials in the late 2000s informally described Belarus as one of “Iran's windows to the world,” which should be kept open in case sanctions should be strengthened and as one of the few pillars on which Iran could rely in the contemporary world alongside Cuba, Venezuela, Sudan and Syria (Hosseini 2008). This position remained seemingly marginal in the Iranian establishment even under the presidency of Ahmadinejad.

Although Iran recognised Belarusian independence at the same time as other former Soviet republics (in December 1991), Tehran was in no hurry to establish diplomatic relations with Minsk – unlike most other post-Soviet nations. Diplomatic relations between Belarus and Iran started in March 1993 and were apparently initiated by Tehran.

In those years, Iran achieved its first successes in overcoming the negative consequences of its previous war with Iraq, which had ended in open military clashes with the US. Under President Rafsanjani (1989-1997), Iran entered the Epoch of Reconstruction and expanded its economic and security interests (it paid special attention to the latter due to the unstable situation at its borders and in some provinces of the country). During this time, it tried to take advantage of opportunities generated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and open up to some Western countries.

Tehran, however, did not want to antagonise Moscow and acted with remarkable caution in the post-Soviet space. Iranian political thought preserved the idea of post-Soviet nations being in the domain of Russia up until the 2000s. Statements made in 2005 by the Iranian

Chairman of Parliament Haddad-Adel (FARS 17.12.2005) and by the Iranian ambassador (2008-2012) to Belarus Abdollah Hosseini in 2010 are cases in the point as far as Belarus is concerned. According to Hosseini, “its [*Belarusian*] interests have become so intertwined with Russia that it cannot easily divide its political structure from Russia’s” (Otagh bazargani 1388).

Belarusian leadership in the early 1990s was interested in developing contacts in the Middle East, even contacts involving military matters. Prime Minister Vyachaslau Kebich’s recollections of visits to Arab monarchies in the Persian Gulf demonstrate this (Kebich 2008). However, the Belarusian establishment was busy with other preoccupations until 1997: these included the adoption of a new constitution, elections of a new president and parliament, and the ensuing confrontation between the two. Moreover, the Foreign Ministry of Belarus was still under construction and lacked the infrastructure, material, human, and organisational capacities to deal with such new partners as Iran in an effective way.

The visits of Belarusian prime minister Mikhail Chyhir to Iran in March 1995 and Iranian Vice President Hassan Habibi to Belarus in July 1995 were the first high-level official contacts. In Minsk, Habibi signed a series of agreements: on investments, trade and economic relations, culture, transportation, and notably on military cooperation and weapons sales to Iran. In addition, Belarusian and Iranian officials held talks on possible shipment of Iranian oil to Belarus. Habibi’s visit took place just after Moscow agreed not to sign new arms contracts with Iran under US pressure. Some experts spoke about the possibility of selling Russian weapons through Belarus and Russia creating an ambiguous situation with arms sold to Tehran so that Washington would not be able to identify where the arms acquired by Iranians come from (Kommersant 1995).

b) Stagnation in 1997-2004

Despite these contacts, stable relations were still distant and contacts - rare. In August 1996, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati paid a visit to Minsk and in October 1997 the Belarusian Foreign Minister Ivan Antanovich returned the visit.

Alyaksandr Lukashenka himself actively toured developing nations to find new partners, including Iran in March 1998. By that time, the Belarusian government was able to pursue cooperation with Iran in a more efficient and systematic way, as it had recently reorganised the Foreign Ministry according to state needs: it was merged in 1998 with the Ministry on the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations. In addition, Belarus opened significantly more embassies and consulates in

developing world than before, including the embassy in Tehran established in December 1997.

Iran was also dealing with a new geopolitical landscape. The US remained unconvinced by the pragmatic deals proposed by the Iranian government and launched a policy of dual containment, which envisioned isolating both Iraq and Iran. In April 1995, President Clinton banned all US economic relations with Iran (Litwak 2000: 67). Tehran faced setbacks in relations with European countries as well, especially after the so-called Mykonos crisis. The Russian government also dealt Tehran a severe blow when in 1995 it signed a Memorandum with the US on stopping military cooperation with Iran, including implementation of already signed and launched projects.

Tehran's solution was to turn to other post-Soviet nations which badly needed money. In an apparent attempt to maintain a channel to former Soviet states independent of Russia, it was the Iranian embassy in Kyiv rather than Moscow which dealt with relations with Belarus until the Iranian embassy in Minsk opened in 2000 (officially in February 2001).

The first tangible projects in the late 1990s involved military sales, with Belarus selling Iran tanks. Cooperation between Belarus and Iran remained limited throughout the late 1990s. The Iranian government hoped that the Iranian reformist movement, led by the country's new president Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), would manage to find an opening to the West. Moreover, in 2001 Russian president Putin declared that Moscow would not adhere to the agreement with Americans on halting defence contracts with Iran.

This gave new hope to Tehran, especially after Moscow signed a series of new contracts with Iran. Although Iranian Defence Minister Admiral Shamkhani did briefly visit Minsk in 2001 after his visit to Moscow to sign new contracts, Tehran did not display much interest in Belarus, and the Belarusian president's visit remained unreturned for more than five years, with Khatami declining to visit Minsk even when he visited neighbouring states. The visit by Khatami to Minsk in September 2004 did not bring about any breakthroughs in bilateral relations and a few months later Khatami and the political faction he represented were removed from power in Iran.

c) Uptick in contacts in 2005-2009

The situation changed again in the mid-2000s. Iranian attempts at rapprochement with the West failed, and quarrels with the West over Iran's nuclear program followed. The reformist government in Iran were replaced by a more radical parliament and the presidency of Ahmadinejad. It is difficult to ascertain whether it was Tehran or Minsk that

initiated the revival of bilateral relations under Ahmadinejad, whose first presidential term coincided with the most intensive political relationship between Minsk and Tehran.

Political contacts between the two countries flourished at all levels. In November 2006, Belarusian leader Lukashenka paid a visit to Tehran and in May 2007 Iranian president Ahmadinejad came to Minsk. Besides these top-level contacts, there were ministerial-level visits from officials of both countries: notably ministers of defence, science, and trade, the vice-governor of the Central Bank of Iran, the chairman of Iran's parliament, and others. The last flurry of high-level contacts came at the very beginning of 2010. In January 2010, the chief of staff of the Iranian president, Esfandyar Rahim Mashaei came to Minsk. The next month, Belarusian Foreign Minister Siarhei Martynau went to Tehran.

In 2006, the leading Iranian car manufacturer Iran Khodro started assembly production of Iranian Samand cars in Belarus; the next year the Belarusian National Oil company launched an oil extraction project in Iran. In 2010, assembly production of MAZ trucks started in Iran.

These Belarusian-Iranian projects triggered a US reaction. As early as September 2004, the US put sanctions on the Belarusian company Belzneshtpramservis for allegedly selling equipment and technologies which could be used to construct cruise and ballistic missiles (Belapan 2004). In July 2010, American sanctions were placed on Beltekhekspart for its alleged cooperation with Iran, Syria and North Korea; in May 2011 sanctions were introduced against BelOMO as well.

d) Decline in 2010-2015

Relations declined abruptly beginning in 2010 and official visits became very rare. While in 2006-2010 Belarus and Iran exchanged up to ten significant visits every year, in 2011-2012 there were only three important visits registered yearly (Bohdan 2012). The biggest projects launched under the Ahmadinejad presidency – Iranian car production in Belarus and Belarusian oil extraction in Iran – had by then failed. In the case of the former, the Belarusian government apparently did not care about promoting sales of Iranian cars: it never made state agencies buy these cars – assembled in Belarus – despite the wishes of their Iranian partners. In contrast, when a Chinese firm implemented a very similar project in 2016, the Belarusian government immediately ordered state agencies to buy Chinese cars assembled in Belarus. Nonetheless, not all blame lay with Minsk, the Iranian side also refused to replace Iranian components in the cars with Belarusian-produced ones.

In the latter case, the reasons for halting the project are not so clear. In August 2011, the

Belarusian oil company Belorusneft declared that it would stop working in Iran, while the Iranian side accused Belarus of failing to achieve agreed extraction levels. Some media reported that the Belorusneft had given up cooperation with Tehran because of the sanctions placed by the US in March 2011 for cooperation with Iran. Irrespective of which version is correct, the Belarusian government was evidently unwilling to invest much into the project, which by that time was becoming a liability and attracted unwanted attention from Washington.

Belarusian officials blamed American sanctions for stopping at least some important deals between Minsk and Tehran. Thus, in October 2011, the chairwoman of the Belarusian National Bank, Nadzeya Yermakova, stated that negotiations for a \$400m loan, which Belarus hoped to get from Tehran, were suspended because of US sanctions against the Iranian Central Bank (AEB.by 2013; Euroradio 29.06.2012).

The only partially successful large-scale project between Belarus and Iran was the building of the Pryliessie logistical centre near Minsk. The project was implemented by the Iranian private company Kayson, which had some connections with the Iranian political establishment in Ahmadinejad's times. Moreover, the project had been delayed for years and as of mid-2010s was still far from completion, although the first part of the construction project should have been finished by 2011 and the second by 2013 (TUT.by 11.10.2013).

Intensive contacts and political relations did not provide for a corresponding increase in bilateral trade (*see the Table on Belarusian-Iranian trade in Appendix 8*), and trade grew very slowly and unsteadily. Trade started almost from nothing: in 1993 bilateral trade between Minsk and Tehran made up just \$89,000 while by the early 2000s it had reached several dozen million US dollars with significant vacillations between years (\$25.9m in 2000, \$38.707m in 2001 (Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 21.3.2002)).

The Belarusian and Iranian presidents aimed to achieve \$100m in trade turnover as early as 2004, but this goal was not met until 2010. Once this volume was achieved and maintained from 2010-2012 (reaching its highest level in 2012 – almost \$121m), trade shrank again. It recovered in 2014, making up \$110m, and then fell once again to \$70m.

It goes without saying that in economic terms, Iran remained secondary for Belarus, being a risky and unstable partner. Possibly realising this, the Belarusian government even openly gave up some of its previous economic projects with Iran starting in the early 2010s.

e) *Belarusian-Iranian defence-related interaction and foreign policies*

Although the first contacts between the defence officials of Belarus and Iran took place in 1997-1998, they remained undisclosed via official channels and probably involved a limited range of topics. Tehran scarcely considered Belarus an important destination in its efforts to procure what it needed for its armed forces and defence industries. Until the end of the 1990s, Iran found it easier to purchase what it needed in Russia and Ukraine, as they had more equipment, technologies and related services to offer Iran in its quest to arm itself.

Hence, the first visit to Belarus of Iranian Defence Minister Admiral Ali Shamkhani occurred on 22-23 March 2001. Information on this visit is extremely scarce. He met with Defence Minister Alyaksandr Chumakou and President Lukashenka and visited some ministries and enterprises of defence industries. Although Lukashenka emphasised that the two countries had already concluded some deals and they would soon be implemented (BDG 27.3.2001; Radyjo Svaboda 22.3.2001), it is not known what deals he meant. Most probably, Shamkhani and the Belarusian government discussed the continuation of deliveries of tanks, as well as other kind of cooperation related to them.

Minsk and Tehran failed to launch any stable large-scale project in the defence sphere. The next rise in defence-related contacts occurred under Ahmadinejad's presidency and was probably driven more by political will to boost cooperation than any specific project. On 21-22 January 2007, Defence Minister Leanid Maltsau paid a visit to Iran. He held talks with his Iranian counterpart Brigadier General Mostafa Mohammad Najjar and met with senior Iranian political and defence officials, including President Ahmadinejad and commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Rahim Safavi. As a result of the talks, Iranian and Belarusian defence ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of defence. The agreement concerned, *inter alia*, exchange of expert delegations, technical and training cooperation, continued dialogues, and consultations at the level of the defence ministers (FARS 22.01.2007).

On 4-5 July 2007, Iranian Defence Minister Najjar returned the visit and travelled to Minsk. He conducted talks with his Belarusian counterpart and met with President Lukashenka. Lukashenka announced that Belarus-Iranian “relations in the sphere of military technical cooperation are based on development of production in the sphere of high technologies.” Najjar assured Lukashenka that over the course of the nine months which had passed since the latter's visit to Tehran, “we have significantly advanced... in the sphere of military

technical cooperation.” However, Lukashenka mentioned some unspecified “uncertainties” [*nedogovorennosti*] in Belarusian-Iranian relations which should be clarified, including through talks with Najar. The Iranian delegation familiarised itself with the Belarusian system of military education and training (Interfax 5.7.2007b).

In the absence of publicly available information about the specifics of Belarus-Iranian defence cooperation, military analyst Alexander Alesin guessed that it may have consisted of modernisation of armoured vehicles and aircraft, but more probably some deals on air defence and electronic warfare equipment, telecommunication equipment and automated systems of command and control of troops and arms (both equipment and software) necessary to build an integrated air defence system (Alesin 2007). Belarusian experts are known to have provided similar services to Venezuela, where they were directly involved in the construction of its national air defence system from scratch.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons to believe that the visit brought limited results and certain statements from officials involved lacked a material basis. First, the Belarusian Defence Ministry, directly responsible for the visit admitted: “actually, this is merely an exploratory visit, and it is too early to talk about concrete results.” Secondly, although officials of both countries talked about “signed contracts” and their intention to implement them (Komsomolskaya pravda... 6.7.2007) real deals were few in number. Evidence of military cooperation during this time period is generally limited and sometimes only circumstantial.

5.2. Broader International Context of Cooperation between the (F)SU Nations and Iran

5.2.1. Vulnerability of (F)SU Nations' Cooperation with Iran in the Context of their Engagement with the West

The first part of this Chapter provided numerous illustrations of how relations between Iran and (F)SU nations always involved the interests, sensitivities and policies of countries not directly involved. Almost inevitably, third countries were involved in all kinds of these interactions: first and foremost the West (the Western community of nations led by the US), but also Israel and Arab countries. Sometimes, other post-Soviet countries interfered as well (e.g., Russia in Iranian deals with Ukraine and possibly Belarus).

The hypothesis tested in this Chapter is based on the assumption that the actions of third parties aimed at halting or reducing an (F)SU country's cooperation with Iran would be

more efficient the more the (F)SU country in question is engaged and integrated with these third parties. Specifically, this study focuses on the (F)SU countries' engagement with the West.

This requires a clarification of what “engagement with the West” means here. As elsewhere in this thesis, the West is defined as a global political conglomerate of nations whose core comprise the US and the community of countries closely connected to the US by various political, economic, military, ideological and other links.

This study analyses how engagement with the West has influenced the relations of (F)SU nations with Iran because the confrontation between Iran and the Western community of nations implies that the West – as a whole, its individual nations and their blocs – was interested in influencing defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. What is more important, while some members of the Western community of nations might sometimes have tried different approaches in dealing with Iran, it can generally be assumed that the dismissive attitude of the West regarding Iran, and the Western wish to stop Iran from gaining influence, remained constant throughout the period under consideration.

A number of Arab countries of the Persian Gulf were also interested in influencing the defence-related interaction between Iran and (F)SU nations and keeping Tehran weak in military terms. Nevertheless, their opportunities to do so were more limited than the West. Moreover, most of these countries are closely associated with the West, and they even could coordinate their policies regarding Iran with the West. Therefore, this study focuses on how the West influenced or was capable of influencing this cooperation.

To measure the extent of engagement with the West, it would be useless to look for bilateral links between the country under consideration and nations that are members of the Western community. Bilateral relations are too vulnerable to influence from minor factors, even when the US is involved. A more insightful approach would be analysing the participation of a country under consideration in multilateral cooperative arrangements. Such major structures represent the Western community in general more adequately due to their multilateral nature and mechanisms of collective decision-making.

For the purposes of this study, it suffices to determine the general ways in which the countries under considerations evolved. Therefore, the most visible kinds of arrangements shall be analysed: membership in international organisations and associations – both global and regional – and major types of associations with them. This choice has been made because international organisations provide a formal structure for socialisation processes of nations involved; they indicate their international political, strategic and ideological

aspirations.

This is not only the case for explicitly political or military organisations or associations, such as NATO, the Baghdad Pact or the Warsaw Pact. Other types of international organisations and associations are important in this regard as well. This point was made during Cold War times. As Peter Wiles underlined: “There are no purely economic blocs. No two countries will form a close economic union without political, military, and ideological affinities. ... Moreover, these non-economic affinities invariably precede the economic union, as is now [*i.e., in the 1970s*] particularly evident in Vietnam, Greece, Spain, and Portugal” (Wiles 1980: 306).

The dynamics of joining and leaving international organisations and associations is especially illustrative in the case of newly independent countries, like the post-Soviet republics. Their joining or leaving of such international structures is not considered here as purely a confirmation of existent or disappeared common interests between a country and an organisation – which in turn represent some common position of its member states. Instead, it is considered as a formal statement of political orientation, a statement which is of a more fundamental nature than other political declarations because of the implications which membership involves. It is more telling of where sympathies and targets lie, indicating the formalisation of links and aspirations, “anchoring” to a specific international bloc.

The question of joining various international organisations or associations was a constant source of fierce debate in the post-Soviet countries in the period under consideration, and joining such international structures was considered an important political choice. A good illustration of this can be found in Ukrainian politics. For example, in 2003, the National Security Assistant to Ukraine's president Volodymyr Horbulin insisted that the country could not simultaneously participate in the establishment of a single economic space inside the CIS and strive to join NATO. He regarded the two policies as mutually exclusive: “Ukraine cannot simultaneously be part of one bloc in economic terms [*the Single Economic Space promoted by Russia*], and enter a military alliance [*oriented*] in another direction” (Zerkalo nedeli 28.03.2003).

Indeed, both options were considered incompatible. On 22 May 2003, the Ukrainian Parliament voted in favour of joining the common economic space established by Russia and some other post-Soviet countries. However, after the Western-oriented candidate Viktor Yushchenko became president in 2005, his government proclaimed its intention to join the EU, widely perceived in Ukraine and other post-Soviet nations as incompatible

with the project of a common economic space. This dualistic approach – either involvement with non-Western dominated/ oriented associations or engagement with Western-dominated or oriented associations – was regularly articulated. Moreover, it was also effective with regard to international organisations and associations in the economic field. Thus, on 1 March 2010 the first deputy head of the presidential administration of Ukraine Iryna Akimova underlined that Ukraine would not join the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus at any time because it allegedly “contradicts and will greatly complicate Ukraine's membership in the WTO” (Kyiv Post 01.03.2010).

This perception continued to gain prevalence, and by 2012 Ukraine came to a political crossroads at which it had to choose between EU Association and joining the Customs Union with Russia and some other post-Soviet nations (Shumylo-Tapiola 2012). This question eventually caused a deep domestic political crisis, leading to the toppling of Yanukovych's government and an armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Even more important is the fact that joining an organisation involves being accepted by other members of that organisation. The process involves much more reciprocal acceptance than other forms of engagement. While joining a convention or signing a treaty means making commitments for the future, joining an organisation usually involves fulfilling pre-ordained criteria which other members have already met and are careful to certify.

5.2.2. Engagement Index

To calculate the index of engagement (E), the first step is evaluating the participation of a given country in various international organisations and associations. For the purposes of this study, all the organisations and fora are classified based on the role the Western community played in a given cooperative association. In other words, the organisations and fora are divided into two categories: a) Western-dominated and Western-oriented, b) non-Western-dominated and non-Western-oriented organisations. There are also a number of organisations and fora which do not fit into either category.

The non-Western-dominated/oriented organisations do not need to be anti-Western but simply have their priorities mostly outside the West. Due to its specific nature, the UN and its agencies, as well as the World Bank Group, are not included here. Also excluded are the organisations with narrow thematic focus which show no explicit global political orientation (like the Danube Commission), as well as organisations and forums which effectively failed to pursue any consistent activities (like the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue). On the other hand, the study includes associations and

mechanisms which focus on arms and arms technology proliferation (like the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Missile Technology Control Regime) because of their importance in the context of this thesis. The evaluation conducted here shall be regarded as a relative rather than absolute assessment; it shall compare the three (F)SU nations rather than establish a more universally applicable assessment of their integration with different international blocs.

Participation in international organisations and associations is evaluated according to the following four-grade scale:

“1” – cooperation by establishing joint bodies with an organisation/forum;

“2” – associated membership or partial membership (e.g., excluding major components of full-scale membership);

“3” – membership;

“4” – participation in founding an organisation or a forum.

The values for each country are calculated for every year for the two categories of organisations and fora separately. As a result, two figures are produced, reflecting participation in Western-dominated/oriented organisations vs. non-Western-dominated/oriented organisations. Next, the following formula is used to get a single figure which in a simplified form reflects a country's involvement with the West (*E*):

$$E=w - n$$

Here *w* stands for the index of participation in Western-dominated and Western-oriented organisations, while *n* stands for the index of participation in non-Western-dominated and non-Western-oriented organisations.

5.2.3. Broader International Context and Soviet-Iranian relations in 1989-1991

The Soviet-Iranian rapprochement occurred during the end of the Cold War at a time of rapid improvement of Soviet relations with the West in general and the US in particular. At the same time, the USSR still remained weakly integrated with the Western bloc and its allies. Soviet participation in international organisations and associations is presented in the Tables 6 and 7 below. This context led to a situation in which the West (primarily the US) and the USSR could not influence many crucial international moves of the other party. On one hand, the West could not stop Moscow from selling huge amounts of weapons to Iran. On the other hand, the Soviet Union could only watch the operations of Western

countries and their allies against Iraq in 1991.

It was not just the West which possessed little leverage over the USSR during this period. When dealing with Iran, Moscow had no relations with two of its major opponents in the region, which were also close allies of the West. It was these nations – especially Israel and Saudi Arabia – that faced the biggest consequences from the new strategic reality created by the supply of the Soviet weapons to Tehran. It was not until September-November 1990 that the USSR reached an agreement with Saudi Arabia on full normalisation of relations. This was also true for Israel: the USSR did not restore diplomatic relations with the country until 18 October 1991.

Table 6. Membership of the Soviet Union in International Organisations and Associations in 1989-1991.

Organisation	Beginning of Membership, Association, etc.	End of Membership, Association, etc.	Western or non-Western Dominance/Orientation of the Organisation	Status
Council for Mutual Economic Assistance	1949	1991	NW	Founding Member
Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe	1973	-	n/a	Founding Member
Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance (Warsaw Pact)	1955	1991	NW	Founding Member

Note. Compiled by the author.

Table 7. Index of the Soviet Union's Engagement with the West

Year	Participation in Western-dominated /oriented organisations and associations	Participation in non-Western-dominated/oriented organisations and associations	Index of Engagement with the West
1989	0	8	-8
1990	0	8	-8
1991	0	8	-8

Note. Calculated by the author.

5.2.4. Broader International Context and Russian-Iranian relations

Russian policies remained generally Western-friendly throughout the 1990s. Despite some quarrels in the second half of the 1990s (over Moscow's handling of Chechnya or conflicts in Yugoslavia) Moscow sought to partner with the West and became disillusioned when it faced difficulties in joining Western-dominated international organisations (Light 1996: 85). However, until the late 1990s Russia remained loosely integrated into Western and Western-dominated international structures. Economically, it depended on exporting oil and gas – mostly to the Western and Central Europe – throughout the period under consideration.

In the 1990s, Moscow actively sought membership in Western-dominated organisations and regimes. The Russian Federation became a member of the Council of Europe on 28 February 1996. Although it submitted its first application to the organisation as early as July 1992, its admission was postponed (the First Chechen War which started in 1994 was also a cause for this). Likewise, Russia's negotiations over an economic agreement with the European Union were also delayed by the latter's protests over Russian policy in Chechnya (Light 1996: 85).

Even more illustrative is Russia's interaction with NATO, a core organisation of the Western world. As early as 1991, Russia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, which was established as a forum for consultation with former Eastern bloc nations; in 1994 Russia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. On 27 May 1997, Russia and the NATO member states signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security and founded the Permanent Joint Council (PJC). In 1996 and 1999 Russian troops were deployed as part of NATO-led peacekeeping forces in the Balkans. The disruption in relations in 1999 due to NATO's Kosovo operation lasted only a few months.

Relations with key Western countries remained generally good despite some crises, such as Russia's war in Chechnya or the Western countries' operation in the former Yugoslavia.

Certainly not all of Russia's international entanglements impeded its dealing with Iran. In 1997-1999, experts close to the Kremlin articulated the idea of a "geopolitical axis" which could include Russia, Iran and China. Some media outlets followed suit and wrote about the possible "emergence of an informal anti-American alliance consisting of Iran-China-Russia" (Vlasov 1998). However, this alignment remained merely hypothetical and no trilateral arrangements or projects ensued.

After the tensions with the West caused by the 1999 Kosovo conflict, as early as in May 2000 Russia resumed its broader cooperation in the PJC with NATO. Notably, after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US, Russia's President Putin was the first foreign leader to call President Bush and suggest joint action to combat terrorism. Russia provided its airspace to the US-led coalition in the ensuing war in Afghanistan and supplied it with intelligence data.

In May 2002, NATO opened a Military Liaison Mission in Moscow, and Russian and NATO member countries signed a declaration entitled “NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality” and established the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) which replaced the PJC. In 2006-2007 Russian ships were deployed in the Mediterranean to support NATO's Operation Active Endeavour.

Even the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 had little influence on relations between Russia and the West. Though formal meetings of the NRC and cooperation in some fields were suspended, NATO cautiously defined Moscow's actions as disproportionate military action and kept cooperating in key areas of common interest like counter-narcotics and the fight against terrorism. As early as December 2008, NATO foreign ministers decided to start re-engaging with Russia, and in March 2009 formal meetings and practical cooperation under the NRC were resumed.

In the early 2010s, Russia continued integrating with international organisations and regimes dominated by the West and its allies. Thus, on 22 August 2012 Russia became a member of the WTO.

Russia also continued to actively cooperate with NATO on such important issues as stabilisation in Afghanistan and missile defence, while sending its forces to participate in a 2011 NATO exercise and holding other joint exercises with NATO the same year. On 1 April 2014, NATO foreign ministers decided to suspend civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia. Yet even despite deteriorating relations with the West, especially on Syria and several other issues, the general orientation of the Russian establishment remained the same. Even at the peak of confrontation over Ukraine and Syria, Russia's Putin government wished to return or stay a part of the Western-dominated political and economic structures (Bild 12.01.2016). Russia's integration in international organisations and associations is reflected in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Membership of Russia in International Organisations and Associations in 1992-

Organisation	Beginning of Membership, Association, etc.	End of Membership, Association, etc.	Western or non-Western Dominance/Orientation of the Organisation	Status
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation - APEC	1998	-	n/a	Member
Black Sea Trade and Development Bank	1997	-	n/a	Founding Member
BRICS	2006	-	NW	Founding Member
Central Asian Cooperation Organisation	2004	-	NW	Member
Commonwealth of Independent States	1991	-	NW	Founding Member
Council of Europe	1996	-	W	Member
Collective Security Treaty Organisation	1994 (2002)	-	NW	Founding Member
Eurasian Economic Union (with all predecessor organisations)	2003	-	NW	Founding Member
Energy Charter Treaty	1991	-	W	Russia signed and between 1994–2009 provisionally applied the 1994 Treaty and Protocol OC
G20	1999	-	W	Founding Member

¹¹ The data on Russia's membership in international organisations has been taken from Mid.ru 18.12.2015

G8	1997	2014	W	Member
Missile Technology Control Regime	1995	-	W	Member
NATO	1997	2014	W	Common joint bodies: 1997-2002 - the Permanent Joint Council, 2002-2014 - the NATO-Russia Council
Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe	1973	-	W	Founding Member
Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation	1992	-	W	Founding member
Paris Club	1997	-	W	Member
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation	1996 (2001)	-	NW	Founding Member
Union State of Russia and Belarus	1996	-	NW	Founding Member
Wassenaar Arrangement	1996	-	W	Founding Member
World Trade Organisation	2012	-	W	Member

Note. Compiled by the author.

5.2.5. Broader International Context and Ukrainian-Iranian relations

From the very beginning of its independent existence, Ukraine held a principled although sometimes inconsistent policy of alignment with the West (especially the US) and allied non-Western countries. As early as May 1992, Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk travelled to Washington.

However, until mid-1993, the US along with Russia put pressure on Kyiv to give up its

nuclear weapons (which were effectively controlled by Moscow). This caused Ukrainian relations with the US and the West in general to remain cool from 1992-1993. This changed in the winter of 1993-1994 when Ukraine conceded and completely renounced its nuclear arms.

Kyiv also joined various Western-dominated international organisations and regimes. Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, and in 1994 became the first CIS country to join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP). In the 1990s, Ukrainian troops participated in NATO-led operations in the Balkans. In July 1997 NATO member states and Ukraine signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership to develop NATO-Ukraine and established the NATO-Ukraine Commission. At the same time, Ukraine opened a diplomatic mission to NATO.

Kyiv also became a member of Western-led organisations like the Council of Europe, which Ukraine joined on 9 November 1995. Despite personal and political changes in Ukrainian leadership, Kyiv generally aspired towards membership in Western structures, especially Euro-Atlantic ones. As early as May 2002, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma proclaimed Ukraine's aim of eventual NATO membership, and in November 2002 the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan was adopted, which aimed to help Ukraine in its efforts to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration. This political course continued under the new government following the Orange Revolution, and in April 2005 an Intensified Dialogue on Ukraine's aspirations to NATO membership started; NATO also adopted a package of short-term actions to support Ukraine's reforms.

In 2007, 2008 and 2010, Ukraine deployed ships in NATO's Operation Active Endeavour and in April 2008 NATO member states announced that Ukraine would become a NATO member in the future. In May 2008 Ukraine also joined the WTO.

After the political change in Kyiv, in February 2010 the new Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich removed NATO membership for Ukraine from Kyiv's agenda. In June 2010, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a bill on the country's non-alignment. Nonetheless, under Yanukovich Ukraine continued its cooperation with NATO and also pursued an EU association agreement.

Ukraine intensified its efforts to join NATO and the EU after the 2014 toppling of the Yanukovich government. On 29 December 2014 the non-bloc status of Ukraine was rescinded and Kyiv officially announced its intention to fulfil the criteria needed for NATO membership and integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures. New Ukrainian government also signed the EU association agreement. The overview of Ukraine's participation in

international organisations and associations is reflected in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Membership of Ukraine in International Organisations and Associations in 1992-2015¹²

Organisation	Beginning of Membership, Association, etc.	End of Membership, Association, etc.	Western or non-Western Dominance/Orientation of the Organisation	Status
Black Sea Trade and Development Bank	1997	-	n/a	Founding Member
Central European Initiative	1994	-	W	In 1994-1996 – Associate Member, since 1996 - Member
Commonwealth of Independent States	1991	-	NW	So-called state-participant, effectively associated member
Council of Europe	1995	-	W	Member
Energy Charter Treaty	1991	-	W	Member
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	1992	-	W	Member
European Union	2014	-	W	Association agreement
Missile Technology Control Regime	1998	-	W	Member
NATO	1997	-	W	In 1997-2002 common joint body - the NATO-

¹² Data on Ukraine's membership in international organisations has been taken from the official web-site of the Ukrainian government (Ministerstvo zakordonnyx sprav... 01.07.2016).

				Ukraine Commission, since 2002 – steps taken to join NATO (November 2002 the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan, April 2005 - an Intensified Dialogue, etc.)
Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM (including Community of Democratic Choice as a predecessor organisation)	1997	-	W	Founding Member
Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe	1992	-	W	Member
Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation	1992 (1999)	-	W	Founding Member
Wassenaar Arrangement	1996	-	W	Member
World Trade Organisation	2008	-	W	Member

Note. Compiled by the author.

5.2.6. Broader International Context and Belarusian-Iranian relations

In 1992-1995, Belarusian foreign policy remained more or less confined to two directions: a stronger post-Soviet one (especially Russian) and an increasingly weak Western one.

Although in 1992 Belarus joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and in 1995 it joined the NATO programme Partnership for Peace (PfP), even in the early 1990s it lagged behind both Russia and Ukraine in cooperation with Western-dominated international organisations and regimes.

In 1997-98, the Belarusian situation changed radically after the first president of the country consolidated power and ran into trouble with the West. Henceforth, the government would set new priorities in foreign policy, including a “multi-vector” foreign policy. President Lukashenka himself proclaimed the multi-vector principle at the All-Belarusian People's Congress of October 1996: “Given our geopolitical situation only the multi-vector balanced foreign policy can be efficient” (Brazovskaya 1996: 28). Moreover, in 1999 Belarus halted all cooperation with NATO in protest of the NATO operation in Kosovo.

Despite all these apparently favourable factors which should have driven Minsk to cooperate with countries like Iran, there was no real growth of collaboration with Tehran, and cooperation stagnated until ca. 2004. The rise of cooperation with Iran in this period did not hinder Minsk's cautious steps with regard to NATO. In 2004 Belarus joined a major component of the PfP programme: the Planning and Review Process (PARP).

Starting in 2002, Belarus faced ever harsher treatment from the Russian government. Minsk sought even more actively to diversify its foreign relations, especially after its regional manoeuvrability diminished when Central and Eastern European countries like the Baltic States and Poland joined NATO and the EU and ideas for separate regional security and cooperation mechanisms were discarded. Belarus's integration with international organisations and associations as presented in the Table 10 still emphasise its distance from the West.

Meanwhile, by the early 2010s, Minsk was most probably being offered incentives for halting its collaboration with Iran (and also Syria – Belarus's relations with both nations were criticised by the US and Middle Eastern countries associated with the US). Israel displayed the most active and open opposition to Belarus-Iranian relations but some Western-affiliated Arab regimes were also probably involved, notably Qatar and perhaps also the UAE. These countries worked on stopping Minsk from aiding radical Middle-Eastern governments such as Iran and its allies (Syria, Iraq after 2003) and associates (Libya).

No explicit correlation between Belarus's problems in cooperation with Iran and the West could be found. If these correlations exist, they must be indirect. Throughout these years,

Belarusian officials even emphasised that they did not see contradictions in concurrent cooperation with mutually hostile countries.

More remarkable is the evolution of Minsk's Middle Eastern partnerships in the 2010s. A case in point is the Belarusian-Iranian relationship in 2011, which experienced a serious decline after Belarus established closer relations with conservative Middle-Eastern Arab states affiliated with the West (Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia).

Table 10. Membership of Belarus in International Organisations and Associations in 1992-2015¹³

Organisation	Beginning of Membership, Association, etc.	End of Membership, Association, etc.	Western or non-Western Dominance/Orientation of the Organisation	Status
Central European Initiative	1996	-	W	Member
Collective Security Treaty Organisation	1994 (2002)	-	NW	Founding Member
Commonwealth of Independent States	1991	-	NW	Founding Member
Energy Charter Treaty	1991	-	W	Belarus provisionally applies the 1994 Treaty, Protocol and the 1998 Amendment.
Eurasian Economic Union (with all predecessor organisations)	2003	-	NW	Founding Member
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	1992	-	W	Member
Inter-Parliamentary Union	1994	-	n/a	Member
Non-Alignment Movement	1998	-	NW	Member
Organisation for	1992	-	W	Member

¹³ The data on Belarus' membership in international organisations has been taken from: MID Belarusi 16.12.2015.

Security and Co-operation in Europe				
Union State of Russia and Belarus	1996	-	NW	Founding Member

Note. Compiled by the author.

The course of all three (F)SU nations' integration with the West is summarised in Table 11 below.

Table 11. Index of Engagement of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus with the West in 1992-2015

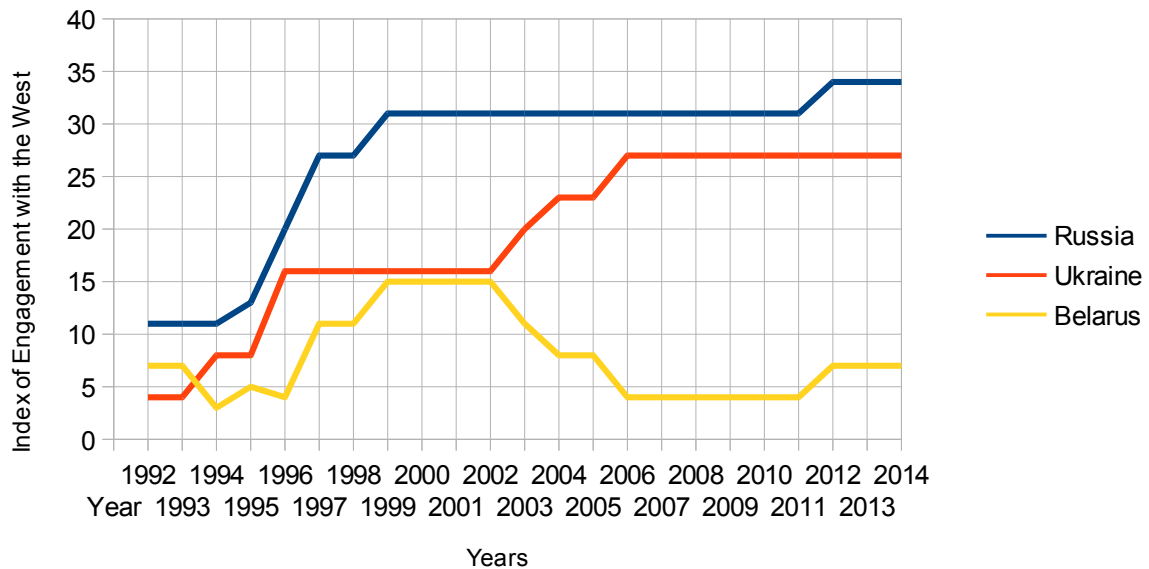
Year	Russia			Ukraine			Belarus		
	Participation in Western - dominated/oriented organisations and associations	Participation in non-Western - dominated/oriented organisations and associations	Index of Engagement with the West	Participation in Western - dominated/oriented organisations and associations	Participation in non-Western - dominated/oriented organisations and associations	Index of Engagement with the West	Participation in Western - dominated/oriented organisations and associations	Participation in non-Western - dominated/oriented organisations and associations	Index of Engagement with the West
1992	11	4	+7	13	2	+9	9	4	+5
1993	11	4	+7	13	2	+9	9	4	+5
1994	11	8	+3	15	2	+13	8	8	0
1995	13	8	+5	18	2	+16	8	8	0
1996	20	16	+4	21	2	+19	11	12	-1
1997	27	16	+11	27	2	+25	11	12	-1
1998	27	16	+11	30	2	+28	11	15	-4
1999	31	16	+15	30	2	+28	11	15	-4
2000	31	16	+15	30	2	+28	11	15	-4
2001	31	16	+15	30	2	+28	11	15	-4
2002	31	16	+15	30	2	+28	11	15	-4
2003	31	20	+11	30	2	+28	11	19	-8
2004	31	23	+8	30	2	+28	11	19	-8
2005	31	23	+8	30	2	+28	11	19	-8
2006	31	27	+4	30	2	+28	11	19	-8
2007	31	27	+4	30	2	+28	11	19	-8
2008	31	27	+4	33	2	+31	11	19	-8
2009	31	27	+4	33	2	+31	11	19	-8

2010	31	27	+4	33	2	+31	11	19	-8
2011	31	27	+4	33	2	+31	11	19	-8
2012	34	27	+7	33	2	+31	11	19	-8
2013	34	27	+7	33	2	+31	11	19	-8
2014	34	27	+7	35	2	+33	11	19	-8
2015	30	27	+3	35	2	+33	11	19	-8

Note. Calculated by the author.

General trends in the engagement with the West of the (F)SU nations are presented in the following Figure.

Figure 2. Index of Engagement with the West of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in 1992-2015¹⁴.



The Index values calculated here provide a basis to test the sub-hypothesis on possible correlation between a country's engagement with the West and its level of cooperation with Iran.

5.3. Possible Correlations between the (F)SU Countries' Cooperation with Iran and Their Engagement with the West

To summarise the analysis of this Chapter, the dynamics of general and defence-related interaction between (F)SU countries and Iran, as well as the state of relations of the (F)SU nations with Iran in respective periods, are presented in the following tables.

The state of relations is presented using the following symbols:

«↑» - relations growing;

«→» - stable or stagnating relations;

¹⁴ Note. Calculated and drawn by the author.

“↑↓” - contradictory dynamics of relations;

«↓» - relations in decline or tensions.

Table 12. Comparison of Soviet and Russian relations with Iran and the West.

Year	State of relations with Iran	Average annual volume of defence-related cooperation (transfers, \$, million)	Index of Engagement with the West
1989	↑	370	-8
1990	↑		-8
1991	↑		-8
1992	→	500	+7
1993	→		+7
1994	→		+3
1995	↑		+5
1996	↑		+4
1997	↑		+11
1998	↑	300	+11
1999	↑		+15
2000	↑	250	+15
2001	↑↓		+15
2002	↑↓		+15
2003	↑↓		+11
2004	↑↓		+8
2005	↑↓		+8
2006	↑↓		+4
2007	↑↓		+4
2008	↑↓	150	+4
2009	↑↓		+4
2010	↓		+4
2011	↓	<100	+4
2012	↓		+7
2013	↑		+7
2014	↑	300	+7
2015	↑		+3

Note. Calculated, assessed and compiled by the author.

Table 13. Comparison of Ukrainian relations with Iran and the West.

Year	State of relations with Iran	Average annual volume of defence-related cooperation (transfers, \$, million)	Index of Engagement with the West
1992	↑	40	+9
1993	↑		+9
1994	↑		+13
1995	↑		+16
1996	↑		+19
1997	↑		+25
1998	↓		+28
1999	↓		+28
2000	↓		+28
2001	↑		+28
2002	↑	30	+28
2003	↑		+28
2004	↑		+28
2005	↑		+28
2006	→		+28
2007	→		+28
2008	→		+31
2009	→	+31	
2010	→	<10	+31
2011	→		+31
2012	→		+31
2013	↓		+31
2014	↓		+33
2015	↓		0

Note. Calculated, assessed and compiled by the author.

Table 14. Comparison of Belarusian relations with Iran and the West.

Year	State of relations with Iran	Average annual volume of defence-related cooperation (transfers, \$, million)	Index of Engagement with the West
1992	n/a	0	+5

1993	↑↓		+5
1994	↑↓		0
1995	↑↓		0
1996	↑↓		-1
1997	→	<5	-1
1998	→		-4
1999	→		-4
2000	→		-4
2001	→		-4
2002	→		-4
2003	→		-8
2004	→	10	-8
2005	↑		-8
2006	↑		-8
2007	↑		-8
2008	↑		-8
2009	↑		-8
2010	↓		-8
2011	↓		-8
2012	↓	<5	-8
2013	↓		-8
2014	↓		-8
2015	↓		-8

Note. Calculated, assessed and compiled by the author.

5.4. Conclusions

Iran alone – due to its limited resources and capacities – could never become valuable enough for post-Soviet countries to warrant the risks and consequences of cooperating with it due to the reactions of third parties to such cooperation. Analysis of its relations with (F)SU nations presented in this chapter confirms this.

At the same time, Iran remained a geopolitical *cul-de-sac*: a potentially rich yet currently isolated and weak country. Moreover, general relations between Iran and (F)SU nations remained limited and unstable. Political, economic or infrastructural projects usually either failed or proceeded very slowly and produced less results than expected. Both general cooperation and defence-related cooperation did not differ much in this regard. Another component of cooperation – strategic cooperation between the (F)SU countries and Iran, which is considered in the next chapter – also developed in a very conflicting way and

produced few results.

Iran was not wholly to blame for these unsatisfactory results. When making decisions, post-Soviet governments placed great importance on the general balance of effort and potential impediments and drawbacks. These difficulties surely involved not only the reaction of third parties, but also the lack of preparedness of many post-Soviet governments and businesses to deal with peculiar partners like Iran, even in the best of circumstances. All in all, this made Iran a very complicated partner for all countries under consideration in this study. This is true even for the post-Soviet governments which did not care much about the reactions of third-countries to their deals with Iran (like Belarus in 1997-2010).

The correlation between cooperating with Iran in defence sphere and thereby challenging the international order on one hand and engaging with the West on the other is not direct. In deciding to do business with Tehran, post-Soviet governments were torn between many contradictory motives and factors. While they did have to worry about their own defence industries and export revenues, cooperation always occurred in a wider context, even when deals were meant to remain secret.

This meant that reactions from third parties had to be taken into account, especially when these reactions could be retaliatory. Powerful Western countries and their allies could easily take retaliatory measures not only thanks to their immense material capacities but also because of the nature of the international system: the global West and its allies largely determined international regimes and the general legal order in recent decades.

Starting in the late 1980s, these three (F)SU nations opted for integrating with international structures; these were organisations, regimes and legal frameworks constructed and dominated by Western countries and their allies. Hence, the more they integrated, the more they had to lose if the West and its allies reacted to their cooperation with Iran given that said cooperation challenged the international order and the Western states and their allies.

Hence, the (F)SU nation had few economic incentives to continue cooperating with Iran in the defence sphere, especially starting in the early 2000s. The total trade with Iran of all three (F)SU nations was limited and did not exceed 1-2% of their foreign trade. As of the late 1990s and especially since the early 2000s, defence-related deals have been important for bilateral trade but nowhere near a major part of it.

In the early to mid-1990s the situation was different. First of all, defence industries in the (F)SU nations still remained quite large, their conversions still incomplete, and they

needed revenue to pay their employees. These revenues could only come from export orders, as the national governments were not ordering military equipment (Russia started to order new platforms only in the early 2000s, Ukraine and Belarus followed in the late 2000s). Secondly, national governments themselves had few sources of foreign exchange, and even less experience in export (especially Belarus and Ukraine). Defence firms were among the few that could profit from export and bring hard currency revenues. Sometimes – when local governments gained access to defence industry enterprises (especially in Russia) – the situation played out the same way at a local level.

6. Allies or Competitors? Strategic Cooperation and Competition between Iran and (F)SU Nations

This Chapter focuses on interactions between Iran and (F)SU nations in terms of their geopolitical interests. The term geopolitics is understood here to have two separate meanings.

The first and more conventional understanding of geopolitics focuses on the links between geographical factors and socio-political developments. The second definition effectively sees geopolitics as an ideology. This approach was conceived and elaborated by mostly Russian authors (like Alexander Dugin, Leonid Ivashov, etc.). Although it claims to be a kind of science (and hence objective), it is essentially an ideology, functioning as a part of a wider Eurasianist ideology. This Chapter deals with geopolitics in the first sense, i.e., as a concept which considers geographical aspects as important to socio-political developments.

Geographical factors are more constant than political ones, and this has two important implications. First, they create a longer-term framework for relations between countries. Second, they ensure a certain continuity between foreign policies of different political regimes ruling the same country. Although geographical factors – understood in terms of geopolitics – are more stable and constant, they are also subject to change. As far this thesis is concerned, the following changes are the most relevant for the issues at hand: first, changes which occurred when the political map was redrawn (the collapse of the Soviet Union, division of the Caspian Sea, etc.), and second, changes in the importance of geographical factors as a result of technological progress or large-scale infrastructure construction (pipeline and railway construction, development of canals, and so forth).

The significance of geographical factors has been acknowledged by both scholars (see Jahangir Karami 1389) and political experts who analysed relations between Iran and (F)SU nations. Several politically engaged experts have mixed the notion of geopolitics as an analytical research approach with the notion as geopolitics as an ideology. Here I only consider those statements which concern the importance of geographical factors for understanding (or promotion) of cooperation between Iran and the (F)SU states.

This Chapter shall investigate how geopolitical factors drove defence-related cooperation between the (F)SU nations and Iran. The influence of geopolitics has been openly

articulated by post-Soviet analysts directly involved in policy advising. For instance, Ruslan Pukhov, director of Russia's Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), referred to geopolitical cooperation while commenting on a large presumed arms deal concluded during Iranian Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani's visit to Russia in 2001. As Pukhov told RFE/RL: "Iran, together with Armenia, is the only full Russian ally in the Middle East region. Even if Iran has a very important role in the Muslim world, it openly backed the Russian military operation in Chechnya, never condemned it" (Iran Report 02.10.2001). However, no major evidence-based studies have been published on the issue so far.

Analysis shall be based on the two following basic concepts: direct national security interests and possible balancing alliances. This requires identifying when and under what circumstances Iran was considered by other countries to be a threat, and if so, of what kind of threat. In addition, the study shall determine when and under what circumstances the (F)SU countries decided to develop balancing alliances with Tehran. The answers to these two questions shall be compared with the dynamics of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations to find possible correlations.

6.1. Iran's Strategic Concerns and Cooperation with the (F)SU Nations

Iranian elites have shown that they pay attention to geopolitical issues. Thus, the Iranian Association of Geopolitics was founded in 2002; it included among its founding members Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf and Seyed Yahya Safavi Hamami, and the latter also serves as the Chairman of the Steering Board. For many years, both individuals served in top offices in the security sphere and remain closely linked to Iran's government. Safavi was the chief commander of the IRGC in 1997-2007, while Ghalibaf was the commander of the Revolutionary Guards' Air Force from 1997-2000 and chief of Iran's National Police from 2000-2005; since 2005 he has served as the mayor of Tehran.

Safavi's five-volume study of the military geography of Iran (1378-1381) stands out particularly among Iranian geopolitical writings. The work continues the tradition of such studies started by former Prime Minister Ali Razmara (1901-1951). After studying in France, before WWII Razmara published a series of partly geopolitical studies on the military geography of Iran. Safavi's published texts include references to American and German geopolitical writings (e.g., Safavi 1378-1381, and 1392). While analysis of these studies is beyond the scope of this thesis, the fact of their publication proves that thinking in strategic and geopolitical terms has been present inside the Iranian security and political

establishment for decades.

A seminal figure in the Iranian political establishment and the IRGC, in the early 2010s Mohsen Rafiqdoost described Iran's situation in the following terms:

“Iraq attacked Iran acting as a proxy for two blocs: American and Soviet. Still nothing has changed with regard to the [Islamic] revolution. If today we take a look at the situation that is developing in the world and the world's hostility against us, we see Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union next door to us, and every time that it believes that it is possible to inflict damage to the revolution, it collaborates with America [hamdast mishavad]. Our enemies have not changed” (Elamiyan 1392: 216).

Indeed, in geopolitical terms, many strategic concerns of Iran since the establishment of the petroleum-centred state in the second half of the twentieth century have remained essentially the same, despite changes in the configuration of adversaries and competitors. Given the key role of oil for Iran's economy and government revenues, the region where the oil is extracted is one of the most important areas and is guarded by the Iranian government. This area lies in the southwestern part of the country, comprising the Khuzestan province and adjoining parts of the Persian Gulf.

As Iran's oil exports depend heavily on tankers, the regions through which these exports are transported are vitally important for Iran. Especially important is the Strait of Hormuz, through which a considerable share of the world's oil traffic passes. This makes it a so-called “choke point” of the regional and global economy. These factors contribute to the value of the Persian Gulf region for Tehran, which uses the region as leverage for its international policies, including possible military confrontation.

Under the Shah, Tehran considered Iraq and Arab radicals to be the foremost threats to Iran in this part of its neighbourhood. Iraq possessed a modern army and the support at different points in time of various external backers (ranging from the USSR to Arab monarchies and the West).

This situation started to change in the early 1990s when the regime in Baghdad became fragile and finally fell following the 2003 invasion of the US. Nevertheless, until this time Tehran considered Saddam Hussein's Iraq a threat. In addition, in the 1990s the US – which openly supported containment and even regime change in Tehran as well as in Baghdad – dramatically increased its military presence in the Persian Gulf. In particular, in 1995 the US reactivated its Fifth Fleet, headquartered in Bahrain. This was followed by the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in the early 2000s.

Despite the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in 2011, Iran still had to contend with the US military presence there. Given the uneasy – and since 2011 increasingly hostile – relations with the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, this made the southern border and its adjoining area a priority for Iranian national security policies.

Iran's interests to the North are expressed mostly in negative terms: they are primarily aimed at preventing threats rather than increasing capacities. This has to do with the vulnerability of the country in the north. Under the Shah, Tehran prepared for the possibility of a Soviet invasion. Indeed, it encountered one – accompanied by a British invasion in the south – in 1941. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tehran was simultaneously worried about possible instability in adjoining post-Soviet regions and hopeful that it could extend its influence to former Soviet states that once belonged to what it considered to be the Persian sphere of influence. At the very least, the Iranian government wished to provide the land-locked post-Soviet republics with an alternative point of access to global markets.

In an interview in 1998, Iran's then Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani put it thus:

“We feel threatened by two things: One is the foreign military presence in the Persian Gulf, especially the U.S. military presence. And second is the ethnic movements in Central Asia. We expect the American nation to alleviate one of these challenges by drawing back or evacuating from the Persian Gulf” (Los Angeles Times 15.11.1998). Given the top offices Shamkhani occupied throughout the period under consideration here, this description can be regarded as a brief strategic vision of the Iranian leadership.

6.2. Soviet Strategic Concerns and Cooperation with Iran

The Soviet Union was an immediate neighbour of Iran (see the Map 1. below), and the common border of the two countries was greater than 2,000 km. This was considerably longer even than the Soviet-Turkish border, (602 km). The presence of a common border is always important for bilateral relations. As Malcolm Yapp emphasised, Soviet relations with Iran, which together with Turkey and Afghanistan comprised a “Northern Tier”, always differed from relations with more distant Middle Eastern countries (Yapp 1982). Furthermore, the Iranian border was more vulnerable for the Soviet Union because it bisected the territory of two large ethnic groups: Azerbaijanis and Turkmen. This created a potential for spill-over of ethnic and religious movements.

Map 1. Comparative Geographical Location of the USSR and Iran.



Note. The map drawn by the author.

For over two centuries, a theory has been circulating in various iterations regarding Russia's expansion towards “warm seas”. This theory, however, is speculative and has been articulated mostly by foreign authors. There is no evidence that Russian leaders ever followed a concept postulating the necessity of reaching south seas, including via Iran. Such suspicions resurfaced most recently when the Soviet Union sent troops to Afghanistan in December 1979.

That said, the Soviet Union, together with Britain, did occupy Iran in 1941 and went on to sponsor two separatist projects in the north of the country. However, it eventually withdrew its support in the face of opposition from Western powers, receiving a promise from Tehran to grant oil concessions in the north of Iran. Later on, the Soviet Union avoided fomenting trouble in Iran despite the existence in the 1950s-1980s of a large communist party there which also boasted a formidable military organisation. As Malcolm Yapp put it: “the USSR had settled happily for good relations [*with the countries of the so-called Northern Tier, i.e., Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan*]. The policy of disruption by encouragement of revolutionary and separatist elements was pursued only in extreme circumstances and as a last resort” (Yapp 1982: 26). This meant that the USSR was mostly interested in preserving stability on its borders.

In the late 1970s, analytical publications in the West widely speculated about the possibility of a forthcoming oil deficit in the Soviet Union, which would drive it to look for oil in the Middle East. However, time proved these hypotheses to be nothing more than speculation. In fact, Moscow had been importing natural gas from Iran since 1970, although this was a rather marginal business for both countries: the Soviet Union was not

desperate for the gas, and Iran was not desperate for the income from deliveries. Trade with Iran always made up a negligible share of Soviet foreign trade.

At the time of the Soviet-Iranian rapprochement of the late 1980s, global competition between the Soviet Union and the US was still ongoing, and the logic of this competition affected Iran's relations with both superpowers (New York Times 20.03.1987). Although later Soviet governments became much closer to the West, and especially to the US, elements of geopolitical competition with the US would continue to influence Soviet-Iranian relations until the end. Thus, meeting on 15 February 1991, Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati expressed his concern to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that the Americans would impose their own order in the Persian Gulf region if they were allowed to militarily suppress Saddam Hussein and no political solution would be found. Moreover, according to an insider report, Gorbachev found an “anti-American mutual understanding” with Velayati (Chernyaev 1991: 17). There were even public accusations that Gorbachev was playing a double game in order to preserve Saddam Hussein and win various radical regimes in the region over for the USSR (Safire 1991).

Iraqi records later revealed that the Soviet government was looking for “a solution that would protect the Soviet Union’s former Iraqi client and make the Soviets an equal partner with the United States in international diplomacy” while still caring about its relations with Washington (New York Times 19.01.2011). In beginning to negotiate new deals with Tehran in the late 1980s, Moscow was aspiring not only to global competition with the US but also responding to Iranian-Chinese cooperation. Thus, while in the early 1980s most of Iran's larger arms deals were with Eastern-bloc countries, North Korea and Switzerland, by approximately the mid-1980s Iran had begun to do significant business with the People's Republic of China. As a top Iranian official put it: “Later, as we got access to China, we got access to an inexhaustible source [*kor*]” (Elamiyan 1392: 192).

The logic of Chinese-Soviet confrontation continued until the late 1980s for both parties involved in that confrontation. An Iranian semi-official account of relations with China puts it thus: “*Understanding that the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the end of the US domination alongside the dismantling of American bases in the country did not equal an increase in Soviet influence over Iran to a large extent reassured China and made it oppose American proposals concerning the economic isolation of Iran and criticise [the US] Tabas operation; that led to the development of Iranian-Chinese relations in various fields.*” (Hami Kalvanaq 1390: 83) Meanwhile, during a December 1980 visit to India, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev demanded that not only the US and Japan not intervene in

the Iran-Iraq war, but also China (*Ibid*: 86).

The issue of the influence of Chinese-Soviet confrontation over Soviet-Iranian relations has so far gone almost completely ignored in scholarly publications. However, even the timing of respective contacts indicates that this factor played a role. While until the mid-1980s Moscow could not be certain about how close Iran and the PRC were (after all, China officially insisted that its weapons are re-exported by third countries to Iran and Iraq), the visit by Iran's then Chairman of Parliament Hashemi Rafsanjani to Beijing in 1985 should have cast aside any last doubts.

During this period of time, Moscow accepted Iranian proposals to discuss opportunities for intensifying economic and military cooperation. In 1985, negotiations over sales of Soviet military equipment to Iran started, followed the next year by the resumption of activities of the Soviet-Iranian Permanent Commission for Joint Economic Cooperation after an effective six-year suspension.

In the last phase of the war, Chinese engagement with Iran not only increased in volume and variety of equipment and arms sold to Tehran but it also became more visible, due especially to sales by Beijing of Silkworm missiles to Tehran. The latter sale even caused a harsh reaction from the US government in 1987 (Ramazani 1990: 44-45).

In the earlier phases of the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, Iran supported the armed Afghan opposition to the Soviet-aligned government in Kabul and provided significant funds and opportunities to some Mujahideen groups. However, by the late 1980s, ca. 1987, Tehran found common ground with Moscow with regards to Afghanistan (Halbach 1989b: 37-39).

Tehran definitely opposed the rise of radical Sunni groups at that point; these distrusted the Iranian government and were backed by several states which were in confrontation with Iran in the 1980s. This stance was also shared with Moscow. Barnett Rubin argued that Tehran struggled “to block a takeover by the U.S., Saudi-, and Pakistani-based groups. Iran preferred Najibullah without Soviet troops to the mujahidin backed by rival states” (Rubin 1995: 116).

Indeed, reportedly after a visit to Moscow in 1989, Iranian officials held a conference with representatives of the Afghan armed opposition. During the meeting, Iran's Chairman of Iranian parliament Hashemi Rafsanjani and the new Supreme leader of Iran Ali Khamenei allegedly advised pro-Iranian Afghan groups to collaborate with Najibullah's government in Kabul (Vatanka 2015b: 201). Although these efforts failed, for some time in the late

1980s Tehran tried to cooperate with the USSR on Afghanistan. It probably gave up these efforts as Moscow started to rapidly lose interest in Afghanistan as the Soviet Union weakened and grew closer to the West.

Although Moscow was interested in keeping Iran stable and away from the influence of the Soviet Union's geopolitical adversaries, this did not entail a *laissez-faire* approach toward Tehran's development. The Soviet government opposed Iran turning into a regional military power, however anti-Western it might be. Thus, in March 1989 Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze expressed his concerns about Middle Eastern countries acquiring ever more sophisticated weapons. He was specifically referring to missiles with a 2,500 km range which were then being eradicated in Europe. Shevardnadze pointed out the immediate significance of these missiles to the Soviet Union's security, saying: "Every missile that can reach Soviet territory is a problem, especially if it is in the hands of governments which cannot be regarded as reliable" (Halbach 1989a: 6-7). In the context of the time, Tehran was one such government.

Other major geopolitical issue that shaped Soviet-Iranian relations at the time included Iran's export of radical ideas and its use of the Caspian Sea and related waterways. On both of these issues, in the late 1980s Iran avoided challenging the Soviet government and sometimes even collaborated with it.

6.3. Russian Strategic Concerns and Cooperation with Iran

Russia is recognised as the legal heir to the USSR and it has inherited many segments of the USSR's international connections, including Soviet links with Iran. The Russian Federation after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 had different geopolitical parameters than the USSR in many regards. It is thus necessary to identify the most relevant major similarities and differences in the geopolitical standings of the USSR and Russia.

This study shall focus in particular on the following similarities: both Russia and the USSR during its decline were countries with huge, global ambitions. Thus, even in times of good relations with the US, the Russian government frequently continued to compete with it. Arguing for rapid measures to strengthen relations with Iran, a prominent political analyst close to the Russian government, Aleksei Gromyko, emphasised that the US was poised to "lure [that country] away" from Russia. He pointed out that something similar had occurred once before when the US made a deal with the Chinese Communist government in the 1970s (Gromyko 1998). While this analogy might be doubtful, his remarks illustrate

the mindset of the Russian establishment.

In the late 1990s, the more liberal daily *Kommersant* also believed that Moscow's interest in reviving cooperation with Iran was driven by Tehran again becoming a country “whose friendship” is sought by many countries, including Western ones. It also emphasised that Russian companies had already lost several huge Iranian contracts to Italians and Chinese (*Kommersant*. 07.03.1998).

This logic – that if Russia would not work with Iran the US and other Western countries would, causing Russia to miss potential gains that could be extracted from partnership with Tehran – was also articulated by top officials directly involved in deals with Iran. Thus, Russia's Minister for Nuclear Energy in 1992-1998, Viktor Mikhailov, later drew the following parallel:

“In the 1990s we joined in the sanctions against North Korea and withdrew our specialists, who, by the way, spent a great deal of work on geological and other studies of sites for the construction of NPPs. We also stopped training Korean specialists. Some time later the Americans, together with South Korea and Japan, formed a consortium called KEDO and began to work in North Korea. [...] If we now join the sanctions against Iran, we will lose the region. And Americans in five to ten years will come to that market and create something like the above-mentioned consortium” (*Novaya gazeta* 09.03.2006).

Both the USSR and Russia focused their foreign political efforts on the West and remained European countries in a certain sense.

There were, however, important differences between Russia's and the USSR's geopolitical situations with regard to Iran. First of all, the USSR, which included the vast expanses of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, directly bordered Iran (through the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics). Russia has no land border with Iran, and its presence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia after 1991 is much more limited than that of the Soviet Union (*see Map 2 below*). The Soviet Union dominated in the Caspian Sea region militarily and also possessed the largest part of it. In contrast, since 1991 Russia's presence has been limited to a much smaller part of its shores and waters. Iran is now even more distant for Moscow and “more Middle Eastern” – whereas it was a neighbour in Soviet times. This certainly did not preclude Moscow's interest in Iran in the geopolitical terms considered in this Chapter.

Freedman described Russia's priorities in the Middle East in the 1990s thus, in order of diminishing importance:

- 1) “Near abroad” of Central Asian and the Transcaucasian nations
- 2) Persian Gulf (balancing among Iran, Iraq and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations
- 3) “central Arab-Israeli zone”
- 4) Turkey (Freedman 1998: 147-8).

Meanwhile, in 1992-1998, Moscow paid the first category considerably more attention than other categories. Moreover, at least part of the Russian government regarded Iran as a hostile actor.



Map 2. Comparative Geographical Location of the Russian Federation and Iran.¹⁵

In the Concept of the Foreign Policy of Russian Federation adopted in 1993, Russia's Foreign Ministry announced that among all the regions of the so-called “Far Abroad” [*dalnee zarubezhye*, i.e., *the countries outside the former USSR*] South and Western Asia were the most important in terms of their direct impact on the situation within the CIS and above all on post-Soviet Muslim republics. The concept continued to emphasise that some geopolitically important states which “did not determine their foreign policy orientation” were located in these very regions, i.e., South and Western Asia. This was considered to be a source of “dangerous instability” that made the prospects of political development in the region uncertain.

Russian foreign policy strategists explicitly cited Iran as a case in point, emphasising that

¹⁵ Note. The map drawn by the author.

Iran renounced any alliance with the US yet avoided a rapprochement with other powers, thus becoming a factor of uncertainty in the region. Moreover, countries in the Middle East were directly involved in several conflicts within the CIS, and the Russia's Foreign Ministry's concept explicitly called out Iran's (and Afghanistan's) influence over the situation in Tajikistan. Countries in South and Western Asia were considered a flashpoint between fundamentalist and secularist movements and “the main channel” for disseminating Islamic fundamentalism in the Muslim regions of Russia and other post-Soviet countries.

As Russian foreign ministry strategists underlined, South and Western Asia border multiple CIS countries, and these republics possessed the least experience in international relations. According to an official document: “This has direct impact on our interests, because it frequently results in the destabilisation of interethnic, interfaith relations within the CIS, makes state-building processes in the southern CIS republics, as well as the prospects and character of relations with them more difficult.” Under these circumstances, the Russian Foreign ministry noticed that unlike the times of the Cold War Russia had no criteria for explicit orientation towards any country and argued for the development of relations with all countries in order to strengthen Russia's positions and counter negative influence of the developments there over the situation in the CIS and Russia (*Vneshnyaya politika i bezopasnost'*... 2002: 41-42).

In 1993, in an analysis of the ongoing civil war in Tajikistan, analysts of the Russian General Staff listed the negative developments on the southern borders of Russia and assumed that Iran (alongside Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey) was striving “to create a new union using the Islamic factor in the Middle East including the Central Asian CIS member states” (Baranets 1999: 35). Turkish and Iranian attempts to develop the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) most likely contributed to the Russian military analysts' conclusion. This triggered a reaction in Moscow.

As Freedman points out: “With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the newly independent states of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus became a central focus of Russian policy, and this affected Russian ties with Turkey and Iran as well as with other Middle-Eastern states. Moscow has tended to view its policy toward Iran and Turkey through the lens of their policies toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, particularly as Russia, with mixed success, has sought to regain control over both regions” (Freedman 1998: 147).

Moscow tried to neutralise the perceived Iranian threat mostly by engaging with Tehran. Thus, in the spring of 1993 the Russian Foreign Minister offered Iran a “strategic

partnership” with Russia, specifically aimed at “providing stability in Central Asia and Transcaucasia” (Izvestiya 01.04.1993). However, this proposal lacked any specifics.

The notion of a strategic partnership in Russian foreign policy has been analysed by Bobo Lo in his book on Sino-Russian relations in the 1990s and 2000s (Lo 2008). As he argued: “During the 1990s, the Russian leadership applied it to every relationship of significance and to many that were not. It was a form of legitimation, often serving to mask a lack of content with the illusion of significance. ‘Strategic partnerships’ were seen as a way of maximizing Russia's 'room for maneuver on a global scale'.” Furthermore: “The proliferation of ‘strategic partnerships’ has, however, greatly devalued the concept... virtually, any significant relationship in Russian ... foreign policy now qualifies as strategic” (Lo 2008: 40 & 41).

Speaking at a conference in December 1996, Russia's Defence Minister Igor Rodionov argued that it was necessary to create a defence alliance [*oboronnyi soyuz*] with the CIS countries and develop Russia's strategic forces as a kind of nuclear umbrella for the CIS. To justify the necessity of these moves he cited not only NATO expansion but also the necessity of deterring certain ambitious Asian nations and respond to “the constant growth of offensive capabilities of their armed forces and their aspirations to enlarge their spheres of influence.” The countries the minister listed included Iran (alongside Turkey, Pakistan, Japan and China and other unspecified countries) (Patutin 1997).

The perception of Iran as a potential – or even actual – geopolitical competitor persisted among Russian civil and military officials. In the late 1990s, the Russian General Staff seemed to be concerned with Iran's becoming a source of weapons for South Caucasus countries (along with the US and other Western countries, Turkey, and Iraq). An expert close to the Russian military establishment pointed to the interest displayed by Georgia and Azerbaijan in such arms deals (Baranets 1999: 179).

By the late 1990s, however, Iran was increasingly considered an ally in countering the influence of Western-aligned Turkey in post-Soviet states. A political expert associated with the Russian government, Aleksei Gromyko, wrote: “In reality, Iran's foreign policy in the regions adjoining Russia, especially in conflict zones ... turns out to be an important stabilising factor” (Gromyko 1998). Another prominent Russian defence official in the 1990s and early 2000s, General Leonid Ivashov, wrote in 2010: “Our territories and resources are coveted by the transnational elite: Anglo-Saxons and Europeans from the west, Chinese and Japanese from the east, and Turks from the south” (Ivashov 2013: 134). He notably excluded Iran from this list.

By the second half of the 1990s, the idea of a strategic alliance between Russia and Iran was frequently mooted. For instance, according to a group of prominent German politicians:

“The collision of different political and economic interests has led to the formation of strategic axes across the Caucasus: the vertical axis runs from Russia via Armenia to Iran, the horizontal axis from Central Asia to Azerbaijan, Turkey and Ukraine to Western Europe. The composition of these axes has to do partly with history, partly with pragmatic considerations, but above all with power politics.” (Rühe et. al. 2001: 2)

In his study of the Kurdish nationalist struggle, Robert Olson presented a similar though much broader picture of confrontation between the two axes of state and non-state actors in the Middle East and Caucasus (Olson 1996). According to him Russia, Armenia, Iran, Syria, the PKK and Greece constituted one axis which in different forms and with various levels of intensity opposed another, composed of Israel, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Chechnya. Very soon, however, this situation changed. As Mark Katz noted, although from late-2000 to mid-2001 Russian-Iranian relations seemed to be evolving into a strategic partnership based on shared interests, disagreements over the status and delimitation of the Caspian Sea were already undermining the relationship (Iran Report 02.10.2001). In the early 2000s, Moscow and Tehran tried to engage one another in new projects in various areas, but mostly with little success.

Thus, on 11 December 2005 Tehran officially declared that it would welcome Russia in joining a transnational project to construct a gas pipeline running through Iran, Pakistan, and India. However, Moscow was apparently considerably more disappointed when it failed to join the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in order to improve its relations with Muslim nations, especially more conservative Arab regimes. Despite the rotating chairmanship of Iran in the OIC and an intensive Russian diplomatic campaign in the early 2000s to join in, Moscow was only able to achieve observer status in 2005.

On the other hand, on 31 May 2006 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov suggested that Iran might join international cooperation arrangements in the Black Sea region. In April 2009, the Secretariat of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation hinted that Iran could receive observer status in this organisation (Vzglyad 03.04.2009). Several unspecified Iranian officials told their Russian counterparts in an unofficial way that Tehran was deliberating its possible participation in CSTO activities, but the Iranian government took no further steps and the CSTO itself never discussed the issue (Izvestiya 20.06.2012).

The perception of Iran as a menace returned to the Russian political and military establishment in the late 2000s and early 2010s due to increasing tensions over Tehran's nuclear ambitions. To show its concerns regarding Iran's plans, Moscow also put on a show of force.

In the early 2010s, the Kremlin seemed increasingly suspicious about Iran's intentions in the Caspian Sea. An expert on the Russian Navy, Sergei Ishchenko, commented in May 2011 that Russia's strengthening of its flotilla in the Caspian Sea indicated that Moscow considered Iran to be a potential enemy (Ishchenko 2011). A little bit later, in September 2011, the Russian media reported that the joint military strategic exercise Tsentr-2011, which involved the armed forces of Russia, Kazakhstan and some other post-Soviet countries, were aimed at training for a defence operation in the Caspian region against possible Iranian aggression.

The Tsentr-2011 exercise shall be considered against the backdrop of concerns over Iran's capacities and threats to shut down the Hormuz Strait, which were widely articulated in the 2000s and the early 2010s. Although Caspian oil and gas possessed less importance for the West and were therefore a less attractive target for Tehran, they could still become a subject of dispute, as the clash between Iran and Azerbaijan in the early 2000s proved.

Although Tsentr-2011 occurred without causing much of a stir in media and politics, Moscow did not take a benevolent stance towards Iran in these years. Thus, in June 2012, the General Secretary of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) Nikolai Bordyuzha avoided specifically addressing whether the CSTO considered Iran "a probable enemy," saying only that the "theme is too sensitive" (Izvestiya 20.06.2012). However, the Chief of Russian General Staff General Nikolai Makarov in April 2012 explicitly said in a public interview that Russia and Europe were threatened by the nuclear capacities of Iran (alongside North Korea) (RIA Novosti 24.04.2012).

The Russian establishment harboured suspicions regarding Iran almost throughout the entire period under consideration. Influential officials and analysts, and sometimes even official documents and decisions demonstrate that Iran was sometimes viewed as a threat, despite certain examples of cooperation analysed in the following sections of this Chapter. The perception of Iran as a threat was particularly strong in the early to mid-1990s and then again in the late 2000s and early 2010s. Ideas of a Russian-Iranian alignment flourished among some quarters of the Russian establishment in the late 1990s to mid-2000s.

Despite considerable speculation, both Russia and Iran generally avoided taking even

minimal steps towards alignment. In particular, Moscow refused to bring Iran into post-Soviet integration arrangements, while Iran avoided coordinating its steps with Russia, most notably during the international crisis over its own nuclear programme (analysed in Chapter Eight).

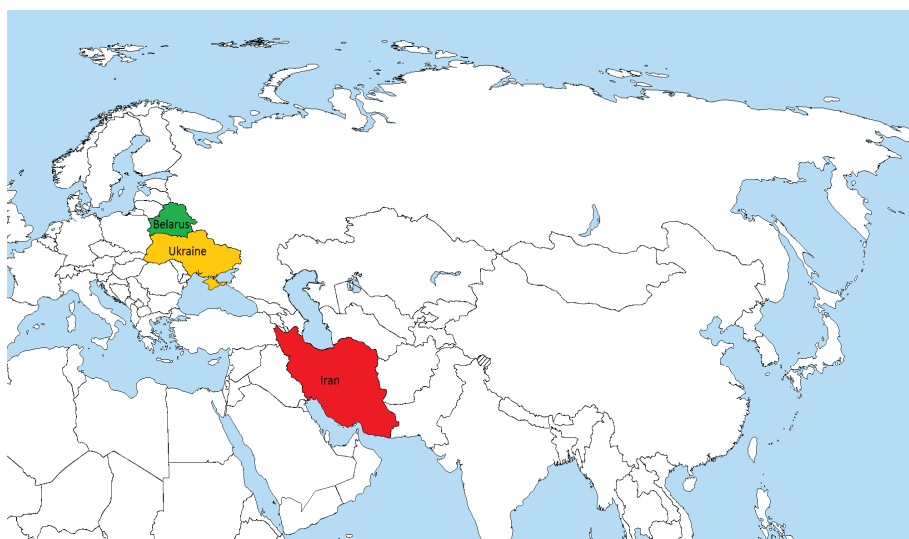
6.4. Ukrainian and Belarusian Strategic Concerns and Cooperation with Iran

Ukraine's and Belarus's strategic interactions with Iran have been similar in several major regards. These similarities stemmed from their location and newly-attained independence in international politics. Ukraine and Belarus, which became independent states in 1991, are rather far from Iran and are not part of any of the same geopolitical regions to which Iran can be considered belonging (*see Map 3 below*). This means that the governments of these countries had no reservations concerning the possible consequences of Iran's gaining power as a result of arms, technologies or expertise transferred there, at least as far as their direct national security interests were involved.

On the other hand, these countries were much more vulnerable to pressure from the West, and even more vulnerable to pressure from Moscow due to their vicinity to Russia and the economic, social and military links between them which they had retained from Soviet times.

Relations with Russia were one of the most important components of foreign policy for Ukraine and Belarus since the very beginning of their independent existence. When these relations became fraught, the post-Soviet states looked for all possible alternative partners to counterbalance Russia.

Map 3. Comparative Geographical Location of Ukraine, Belarus and Iran.



Note. The map drawn by the author.

This was especially true for Ukrainian-Iranian relations. Various projects in the energy sphere became a backbone for these relations. For its part, Kyiv wished to strengthen its economic independence and strived to get oil from Iran as an alternative source to Russia. Meanwhile, Tehran wanted Ukrainian assistance and cooperation in bringing its natural gas to Western European markets, as well as help procuring pipes and equipment from Ukraine produced since Soviet times (Smolansky 1995: 79).

The idea of bringing alternative Iranian energy resources to Ukraine kept returning to Ukrainian political discourse until ca. 2007-8. Thus, relations with Iran even became a theme in the 2006 parliament elections in Ukraine. Former prime minister and leader of BYT Yuliya Tymoshenko argued at the time for diversification of energy delivery sources by signing bilateral agreements with Iran (Sinovets' 2007).

These plans had geopolitical dimensions. Bringing Iranian petroleum to Ukraine and natural gas via Ukraine to Western Europe would have changed the political economy not only of Ukraine but of the entire Eastern Europe. The latter would be at least partially freed from dependency on Russian supplies of oil and natural gas and might benefit from providing transit for one more energy supplier to Western Europe. Iran would also change its geopolitical status by getting pipeline-based access to Europe for its natural gas and oil exports. This would undoubtedly have made Tehran a competitor with Russia. This was not all: “[b]oth Ukraine and Iran distrusted Russia and were determined to weaken its influence, particularly in the outlying regions of the former USSR“ (Smolansky 1995: 79).

As mentioned earlier, Iranian ambitions in Central Asia and the Caucasus in the early 1990s worried the Russian political and military establishment. Ukraine had its own ambitions aimed at becoming a leader in the post-Soviet area if it could, or at least gaining influence there. This culminated in 1997 in Kyiv's involvement in the establishment of the so-called GUAM, a major bloc of former Soviet republics opposing Moscow. The organisation included Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova, which were later joined by Uzbekistan in 1999. Since the very beginning of its independence, Kyiv had been working on developing links with countries opposing Russia on a bilateral basis, too. Moreover, a Ukrainian nationalist organisation sent its members to fight for the Georgian government and Chechen separatist forces in the 1990s; these activities were at least tolerated by the Ukrainian government.

Iran was considered by some Ukrainian commentators as an alternative not only to Russia but also to the West. Ukraine's search for a third way was perhaps due to the close

relationship in the 1990s between Moscow and Washington, as well as other Western capitals. In January 1995 the Lviv-based monthly *Post-Postup* published an article on Ukrainian foreign policy which argued that while the new president Leonid Kuchma was striving to develop cooperation with both the CIS and the United States, even considerable Western financial support could not improve Ukraine's domestic socio-economic situation. Given continuing Russian pressure on Ukraine, the periodical argued against a pro-Western orientation and instead supported the establishment of an “alliance with the Muslim world which share[s] Ukraine's apprehension of Russia and ... its intentions” (Smolansky 1996: 184-185).

Belarus interacted with Iran very little on geopolitical issues, and this can be explained by the considerably smaller size of the country and the more limited opportunities for Minsk. Some researchers argued that the rise in Belarusian-Iranian relations in the second half of the 2000s occurred only with Russian authorisation. Furthermore: “relations between these countries [*Belarus and Iran*] [*were*] shaped by their relationship with the Russian Federation. Potential areas of cooperation, i.e., the energy and arms sector [*were*] limited by Russia, which [*was*] trying to hold a dominant position in the Belarusian energy sector and in the supply of arms to Iran” (Bojarczyk 2009: 260).

This view ignores the major trends in Belarusian foreign policy in the 2000s. Beginning in the mid-2000s, Minsk increasingly distanced its foreign policy from Russia's, although it remained generally aligned to it. At any rate, Minsk never attempted to realise any major projects with Tehran that would involve a geopolitical dimension. Even its attempts to diversify its oil supplies were mostly focused on Venezuela and Azerbaijan, and although the Belarusian state-owned oil company worked in Iran in the late 2000s it never seriously tried to bring Iranian oil to Belarus.

6.5. Influence of Geopolitical Factors on the Quality of Defence-Related Cooperation

The three post-Soviet countries analysed here are hugely different in terms of size, economic capacity and diversity of defence capacities. Nevertheless, taking into account these differences, we can draw several conclusions about the quality of their defence-related cooperation with Iran – meaning the level of advancement and sophistication of products, technologies and services they transferred to Iran.

Moscow could have used certain components of defence-related cooperation to influence Iran's policies. So, delays in the transfer of the third Kilo-class submarine could have been

related to Iran's position on Tajikistan. By providing Iran with submarines and their basing infrastructure, the USSR, and later Russia, effectively forced Tehran to follow the policy line of southward expansion of its security interests, resulting in development of its capacities in the same direction. Due to the concentration of Iran's most valuable economic asset – the oil industry – in the south of the country, along with Tehran's awareness of and wish to exploit the global significance of the Strait of Hormuz – the Iranian government leaned towards this orientation anyway.

However, this southward focus should not be taken to be unavoidable. Iran very much hoped to gain influence in the regions lying north of its borders which had earlier been part of empires which the Iranian establishment considered to be its predecessors. In other words, by encouraging Iranians to develop their submarine fleet, Moscow made them change their plans with regard to the north, both by enabling them to act more efficiently in the south and by directing Iranian resources away from any plans related to the northern territories.

In addition, neither the USSR nor Russia ever sold Tehran any major weapons platforms deployable in the Caspian, although Tehran had plans to develop its Caspian Sea flotilla and actually did so in the late 2000s and the 2010s. Moreover, it had displayed interest in purchasing naval equipment deployable in the Caspian, especially patrol boats, but no major sales occurred. The lists of platforms and equipment supplied by the Soviet Union and Russia include few examples of explicitly offensive armaments. The only exception is the Su-24 bombers. Specifically, very few close air support aircraft were supplied, and no attack helicopters, long-range bombers, tactic ballistic missile systems, cruise missiles and other similar armaments were sold to Iran in the period under consideration.

Meanwhile, Iran most probably needed these arms to modernise its armed force at least to the technological level of neighbouring countries like Iraq and Afghanistan before 1991, both of which were close to the Soviet Union. Tehran did indeed ask Russia to sell it some of these arms (talks on the sale of Tu-22 long-range bombers are a case in point).

Moreover, it needed help repairing old formerly Iraqi close air support aircraft in the 2000s and 2010s and received assistance from Ukrainian and Belarusian specialists – but apparently not Russian ones. The absence of these offensive arms on the list of Russian arms sales to Iran is a remarkable detail that requires more thorough study, but it confirms the hypothesis tested here, that geopolitical concerns define the quality of defence-related cooperation.

The Soviet Union and Russia also never supplied Iran with any major equipment enabling

it to project power. In particular, Iran never procured military transport aircraft from Moscow, although it apparently needed them as it purchased military transport aircraft from Ukraine.

As far as services and transfer of technologies is concerned, the Soviet Union and later Russia were not involved in the transfer of a number of advanced technologies – assembly production of tanks and armoured vehicles were the most sophisticated technology that Russia transferred to Iran. Talks on manufacturing Russian Kamov helicopters ended with no results, and the results of establishment of assembly production of aircraft engines remain unclear.

In contrast, Ukraine, which had no Iran-related strategic concerns of its own, provided Iran with a number of equipment items and technological support needed by Tehran to develop its missile capacities. In addition, it was Kyiv that tried to establish aircraft production in Iran involving both turboprop and turbojet planes, albeit with limited success. Moreover, Ukraine seems to have consistently contributed to the repair and modernisation of Iranian military aircraft, especially of offensive types. Iran also purchased military transport aircraft from Ukraine, which extended its power projection capacities.

Belarusian defence-related cooperation with Iran remained too limited to draw well-grounded conclusions. However, Minsk had virtually no strategic concerns in dealing with Iran due to the size of Belarus and its distance from Iran.

Some of the cases cited above certainly require further study to identify the causes for the supply or denial of a specific type of armament; in some cases, factors other than strategic and geopolitical ones could have come into play. Nonetheless, on the whole the list of supplies confirms the hypothesis that geopolitical factors – the immediate strategic concerns of states – defined the quality of their defence-related cooperation with Iran, taken here to mean the technological sophistication and advancement of equipment and services they provided to Iran, as well as the level of technologies and know-how they transferred there.

6.6. Major Issues of Strategic Cooperation and Competition between the Soviet Union and Iran at Regional and International Levels

6.6.1. Iran's Export of the Islamic Revolution

Iran criticised the Soviet Union's handling of Islam and its attitude toward Muslims, although Iran's opportunities for influence were restricted by confessional differences – as

the mostly Sunni Soviet Muslims had little in common with Shiite Iran – despite all efforts of the Islamic regime to present itself as pan-Islamic. However, this was not necessarily evident to Soviet leaders. As the Kremlin was concerned about an ongoing Islamic political revival in the USSR and the situation in Muslim regions in 1980s, “the need for an understanding with Iran stemmed not in the last place from this perception of threat” (Halbach 1989a: 29).

Tehran itself believed that it could use Soviet Muslims as a leverage to get something from the Kremlin. For instance, according to an account, in 1984 or 1985, at the order of Khomeini, Mohsen Rafiqdust cited the Soviet ambassador and intentionally made a harsh rebuke:

“When will these polar bears wake up? ... We believed that the Soviet leaders are like polar bears. ... Do these fools and idiots not know that Saddam is an American [element]? Do they imagine that Saddam is a supporter [tarafdar] of the Soviets? Tell your leaders that they should not give Saddam so many Scud-B missiles and MiG-25s. We have 70 million bombs in your country [i.e., Muslims], with the fuses in our hands. Do not do something that will make us light these fuses” (Elamiyan 1392: 300-301).

Furthermore, even mainstream Iranian media outlets like the influential Islamic Republic Party’s *Jomhuri-ye Islami* published articles which could be interpreted as promulgating expansionist ambitions and territorial claims. Thus, *Jomhuri-ye Islami* allegedly wrote in 1987 that Iran had a claim to the Soviet Muslim-populated regions together with the Soviet South-Caucasian Christian regions and that the “area shall be liberated” (Halbach 1989a: 27).

Nonetheless, as early as 1990, Tehran had decided on a restrained and moderate position regarding the large-scale crisis in Soviet Azerbaijan, in particular towards the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of the Azerbaijani SSR.

As the residents of Soviet Azerbaijan started to hold rallies and destroy border control installations beginning on 31 December 1989, Iran did not welcome the development. On the contrary, it reached out to Moscow to deescalate the situation, sending the Deputy Foreign Minister to Moscow on 6-9 January 1990 to negotiate an eased border control regime. Even after the massive violence in Baku involving Soviet troops on 20 January 1990, Tehran remained very restrained in its reaction. On 24 January Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati called for a peaceful resolution to the problems in Soviet Azerbaijan and emphasised Iran's adherence to the principle of non-interference.

6.6.2. Caspian Sea

The Soviet Union inherited a series of policies from the Russian Empire which can be interpreted as being at least related to if not caused by an interaction of geographical and political factors. Among these was the effective removal of Iran's military from the Caspian Sea. The Soviet Union essentially adhered to Article 8 of the 1828 Treaty of Turkmenchay. It read: "As for military ships, as only ships bearing the Russian flag have had the right to sail the Caspian Sea since ancient times, by the same principal this exclusive right shall be granted and confirmed today, so that except for Russia no other power shall have military ships in the Caspian Sea." (Treaty of Turkmenchay 1828).

The treaty remained a point of reference for Soviet experts up until the 1990s. Thus, Igor Belyaev, a Soviet journalist who worked in the Middle East for many years and is known to be a close friend of Yevgeny Primakov, a key figure in Soviet and Russian Middle Eastern policies, wrote in 1992:

"Tehran was enthusiastic about Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan sharing the Caspian flotilla, mainly because the situation violated the Treaty of Turkmenchay, which had granted Russia the exclusive right to a navy in the Caspian Sea. Under these circumstances, Iran seems to have acquired a right to a Caspian navy of its own" (Belyaev 1992).

Beginning in the late 1960s, some cargo was transported via Soviet waterways (internal rivers, lakes and canals) from Western Europe to Northern Iran, which provided Iran with a shorter route to Europe and the Soviet Union. This came with a potential (because it never developed as planned) communication line and opportunity for the Soviet Union to develop communications and increase leverage over Iran. By 1987 this route had been conceptualised in the USSR as the so called "Caspian Volga-Baltic Line" [*Kaspiyskaya Volgo-Baltiyskaya liniya*], which passed through Leningrad, the Volga River, Baku and the Caspian Sea (Tsentrnauchfilm 1987).

Although the Soviet Union and later Russia controlled the outlets from the Caspian Sea into world oceans through the Volga-Don Canal and internal Russian waterways, this was a communication route with very limited traffic capacities. Russia even introduced quotas for Caspian countries for transit out of the Caspian Sea via Russian waterways after 1991 (Kommersant 14.07.2016).

6.7. Major Issues of Strategic Cooperation and Competition between Russia and Iran at Regional and International Levels

6.7.1. Civil War in Tajikistan

In the early 1990s, Iran was suspected by the West and Western media, as well as at least some factions in the Russian establishment, of supporting Islamic radicals throughout the world: from Sudan to the Balkans, Algeria, Chechnya and Tajikistan. Thus, then Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency, James Woolsey, testified in a US Senate Intelligence Committee Hearing on 25 January 1994 that: “Terrorism remains a central tool for Iran’s leaders in seeking to accomplish these objectives [related to their ‘extremist’ ideas], and Iranian support for Hizballah and other such groups from Algeria to Tajikistan has not abated.” (Select Committee on Intelligence... 1994: 17).

Many members of the Russian government and government-associated analysts were uncertain or even suspicious of Iran's strategy vis-a-vis the former Soviet republics and other post-Socialist countries, as it was fearful of the possible proliferation of Islamic radicalism supported by Iran and Iranian expansionism. The Russian Government believed that Iran was playing its own game in Tajikistan, thus contributing to the destabilisation of that former Soviet republic. The Russian Foreign Minister at the time, Andrei Kozyrev, said that the “chorus of accusations” articulated by “every” Central Asian leader had convinced him by the early 1990s that Iran was supplying the Tajik opposition with funds and weapons, although he admitted to having “no reliable sources on the ground” (Parker 2009: 84).

Although the details of Iranian involvement in support of the Tajik opposition at the onset of Tajik civil war and in the initial stages of the conflict remain hazy, Iran was actively and widely involved in Tajikistan's politics. At the same time, Tehran certainly did not limit its support to the Tajik opposition (Clark 2014: 100-105).

While Russian officials were very reluctant to mention the role of Tehran in the Tajikistani peace process of the 1990s, they nevertheless eventually had to admit it. Thus, Anatoly Adamishin, a Russian diplomat at the time, later revealed when talking about the beginning of the peace process in Tajikistan in 1993:

“The Iranians have changed their position on a key issue for us: Tajikistan. At the beginning of the Time of Troubles, they themselves were very active Tehran clearly wished to install a government obedient to it in Dushanbe. This did not work because Russia entered the scene. Without abandoning their plan to drag Tajikistan to their side

completely, the Persians then set out to help the forces spiritually close to them and retain influence in the country. This was not possible without achieving a modus vivendi with the government. Here our interests coincided.” (Adamishin 2012)

Tehran started helping Moscow in the second half of 1993, and in some cases Russia even contacted Tajik opposition leaders with Iran's help. Tehran accommodated Russia's interests even at the very beginning of the peace talks, although not without bargaining, for example accepting Moscow as the host city for the peace talks' launch.

Tehran's approach was perceived and even publicly criticised in Iran as a kind of surrender of Iran's political projects in Tajikistan. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Vaezi reportedly complained to Primakov during the latter's visit to Tehran in August 1993 that Iran was being side-lined in its efforts to launch the peace process in Tajikistan. As the Tajik peace talks proceeded, the side-lining of Iran became an issue in Iran's domestic political struggle. The Foreign Ministry even concealed the fact that Adamishin had met with the Tajik opposition in Tehran when the final agreement on the beginning of peace talks was reached. Immediately after this, *The Salam daily*, the most prominent Tehran-based media outlet of the emerging reformist Iranian opposition, published an article on 8 March 1994 which began by attacking the choice of Moscow as the host of peace negotiations for Tajikistan. It then scolded Russia for claiming the central role in mediating an end to a war which Moscow itself had “created” (Clark 2014: 112).

On 5 April 1994, the first round of peace negotiations began in Moscow. Three years later they resulted in a peace arrangement accepted by both the Tajik government and opposition. Negotiations on the peace process in Tajikistan continued until 1997; they were actively supported by Moscow with Iran's assistance. Despite its support of the Russia-led Tajikistan peace, Iran was still not trusted by some officials in Russia.

Thus, in January 1996, Moscow was worried that the leadership of Tajikistan would look for alternative partners if the Kremlin would fail to offer it sufficient support. One of these partners could be Iran, the Russian leadership believed (Baranets 1999: 96-97).

The Tajik Civil War formally ended on 27 June 1997 when the “General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan” was signed in Moscow by Tajik leader Emomali Rahmonov and Tajik opposition leader Abdullo Nuri in the presence of Russian President Yeltsin, Russian Foreign Minister Primakov, Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati, and UN Special Representative Gerd Dietrich Merrem.

6.7.2. Cooperation in Central Asia

By 1996, Russia and Iran held similar positions with regard to the situation in Afghanistan. Both Moscow and Tehran, but especially Tehran, were worried by the Taliban takeover of the country and possible further expansionist plans. To counter this threat, both countries, although Iran did it more actively, started to support the government of Afghanistan led by Burhanuddin Rabbani and other warlords operating mostly in the north and west of Afghanistan.

In the 2000s, interactions between Iran and Russia in Central Asia decreased. Even in Tajikistan, the two countries failed to build upon their previous collaboration in the 1990s. Economic cooperation project such as the Sangtuda Hydroelectric Power Plant (HPP) are good examples of this. While in 2004 Tajikistan, Russia and Iran negotiated on the establishment of an international consortium aimed at completing the construction of the Sangtuda HPP (RIA Novosti 09.06.2004), the very next year these plans were discarded. On 12 January 2005, Tajikistan agreed to two completely separate deals with Russia and Iran. Moscow committed itself to building the much larger Sangtuda-1 HPP while Tehran agreed on the smaller Sangtuda-2 HPP.

According to observers at the time, although Tehran was very eager to participate in the project but since its inception Moscow was ambivalent about Iranian increasing presence in the region where the Russian influence traditionally prevailed. (BBC 12.01.2005)

There were evident reasons for the growing divergence between the policies Iran and Russia pursued in Central Asia. After 11 September 2001, both Russia and Iran opted for collaboration with the US in its war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but as early as 2002 Washington decided to reject Tehran's offers. Moreover, the US officials announced Iran to be a member of the 'Axis of Evil.'

Moscow, however, continued working with Washington and consented to the growing American presence in the region, which included massive deployment of US troops and the establishment of American military bases in the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. This ran counter to Iran's priorities which, however happy it was to see the Taliban ousted in Kabul, did not take well to the long-term presence of Western in its own vicinity, especially American ones.

6.7.3. Iran as a Transit Route or Regional Leader for post-Soviet Nations

Iran quite openly wished to become an alternative to Russia for the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus as a partner in economic development. The 16-17

February 1992 Tehran summit of the revived Economic Cooperation Organisation featured the participation of high-level delegations not only from Turkey and Pakistan but also from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In Tehran's view, this was to become the first step toward the establishment of an Islamic Common Market with Iran as its centre. Concurrently, on 17 February 1992, Iran succeeded in founding an organisation of Caspian Sea countries which included Russia, and on 19 February it held its first meeting of foreign ministers of Persian-speaking countries, i.e., Afghanistan (Rabbani Government), Iran and Tajikistan.

At the same time, Tehran immediately began convincing post-Soviet states, especially in Central Asia, that it could provide alternative ways to transport their goods and resources to world markets as well as to import necessary resources and commodities. During an August 1992 visit to Tehran, Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov signed an agreement on the construction of a gas pipeline linking Turkmenistan, Iran and Turkey. The pipeline was to have a capacity of 28 billion cubic metres and be constructed in some three years.

Almost all of Iran's plans to become a regional leader – or at least provide an alternative route for post-Soviet nations to the external world circumventing Russia – came to naught. The biggest breakthrough to this end was achieved in 1996-1997 before the international isolation of Iran became too strict for such projects to succeed.

In March 1996, the construction of a railway line between Tedzhen in Turkmenistan and Mashhad in Iran was completed. It provided the former Soviet Central Asian republics with a connection to the Iranian railway network and hence access not only to Turkey but also to Iranian ports on the Persian Gulf, effectively dealing a blow to Russia's monopoly on trade transportation routes between former-Soviet Central Asia and the world. Plans to construct this railway line were launched in the 1980s and actually had the support of the Soviet government. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, turned the undertaking on its head. As the project was conceived in late Soviet times, it was meant to play another role: to bind Iran closer to the Soviet Union, create more common interests between Moscow and Tehran through establishing a transport link, and promote the economic development of Soviet Central Asia while giving Tehran a stake in the development of the southern Soviet republics as well.

In addition, on 10 October 1996, construction started on the Korpeje–Kordkuy gas pipeline between Turkmenistan and Iran, according to a 1994 agreement. The pipeline was inaugurated in December 1997 and became the first pipeline enabling Ashgabat to directly export its gas outside the former Soviet Union. Maximum discharge of the line comes to 8

bcm per year. Another gas pipeline, Dauletabad–Sarakhs–Khangiran, between Turkmenistan and Iran, was built in 2009 and became operative in January 2010. Its maximum discharge comes to 12 bcm. Using another kind of arrangement, called a swap mechanism, in January 1997 Kazakhstan started to deliver 30,000 b/d of oil to Iran via the Caspian Sea in exchange for export of oil in Kazakhstan's name from the Iranian Persian Gulf havens (Rieck 1998: 85).

Apparently realising that Iran was providing the former Soviet nations with alternative access to world markets and communications networks, on 27 July 1997 the US announced that it would no longer apply sanctions to companies which invested in the gas pipeline from Turkmenistan via Iran to Turkey.

In the Caucasus, Iran collaborated closely with Armenia. The land-locked country found itself effectively blockaded due to the consequences of its war with Azerbaijan, its lack of relations with Turkey and instability in Georgia in the 1990s. Even after the situation in the region improved slightly, Armenia's situation was fraught, as its communication via Georgia passed through Azerbaijani-populated areas of the latter country, and unlike Armenia, which aligned itself with Russia, Georgia opted to join the Western community and clashed with Moscow over separatist movements in the two Georgian autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008. Given these circumstances, Iran appeared to be the best solution to Armenia's blockade, which probably contributed to Yerevan's choice of a pro-Moscow orientation in its foreign policy.

The most ambitious projects between Iran and Armenia began during the presidential terms of Mahmud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013). Tehran and Yerevan signed agreements on cooperation in energy and transport and agreed to connect Iranian and Armenian railways, construct a number of high-voltage transmission lines, and build an oil refinery on the border with Armenia. Tehran promised to introduce a zero rates regime for Armenian cargo on Iranian roads and grant Armenia a customs-free regime for use of the Iranian ports of Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf and Bandar-e Anzali on the Caspian Sea. However, until the end of the period under consideration, none of these projects materialised with the exception of a high-voltage transmission line (Nezavisimaya gazeta 21.12.2016).

In sum, Iran not only failed to become a regional leader but also failed to provide post-Soviet nations with an alternative route of access to the external world. Moscow registered Tehran's attempts to do so and in the first half of the 1990s might genuinely have been worried about them. However, Iran's failure to achieve serious results in that direction soon became evident. By the late 1990s, this development was no longer a geopolitical obstacle

in Russian-Iranian relations.

6.7.4. Iran's Export of the Islamic Revolution

Russian concerns over Iran's export of radical Islamist ideas was not limited to Tajikistan. Tehran's intentions in Balkans and Caucasus were also a cause for concern. Although there were no direct clashes, there were suspicions which referred to Iran's previous attempts to radicalise the Middle East in the 1980s.

In Bosnia during the war in the early 1990s, Iran consistently supported Bosnian Muslims against Serbs. Russia, meanwhile, favoured the Serbs, in particular supporting the implementation of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan that was rejected by the Bosnian Muslim leadership but agreed to by the leaders of Bosnia's Republika Srpska. At the same time, both Tehran and Moscow were interested in ending hostilities. This issue was a topic of discussion during Russian-Iranian talks, e.g., during the 1993 visit of Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev to Iran (Mahdiyan 2014: 98-99). Iran not only demonstrated its support of Bosnian Muslims verbally, it also acted accordingly, going so far as supplying them with weapons and instructors. On 9 September 1992, Iranian arms bound for Bosnia were detained in the airport in Zagreb and on 13 July 1993 Iran proposed to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference that it send 10,000 soldiers to Bosnia.

Less frequently, the media, politicians and scholars discussed other cases in which Iran was accused – in a formal or informal way – of interfering with Russia's interests. In the case of suspicions that Iran was supporting the separatist government in Chechnya speculations turned out to be baseless. Iran occasionally and in a mild manner protested against the so called “First Chechen War” in 1994-1996 when the Kremlin tried to establish control in Chechnya.

At the same time as it was hammering out a deal with Russia on Tajikistan, Iran found more common ground with Russia on Azerbaijan. Tehran was disappointed with developments in Azerbaijan in the early 1990s when the Popular Front with its pan-Turkic ideology came to power and Turkey, which had chosen to associate closely with the US and other Western countries, gained influence in Baku. Under these circumstances Iran preferred to have the Popular Front of Azerbaijan toppled by the autumn of 1993 and Russia return to its position as the dominant power in the South Caucasus. According to one scholar: “The common interest of Iran and Russia includes maintaining a barrier between Turkey and other Turkish-speaking nations. There was a kind of tacit alliance [*stillschweigende Allianz*] with regard to that issue between Iran and Russia.” (Freitag-Wirringhaus 1994: 218) Although in later times some Shiite militant groups operated in

Azerbaijan, they remained marginal and posed no threat to Russian interests.

By the mid-1990s, Iran had succeeded in allaying Russia over concerns that it was sponsoring Islamic radicalism in the Caucasus and Balkans. This was partly the result of Iran's efforts, and partly followed from the change of situation in respective regions.

6.7.5. The Caspian Sea

Throughout the 1990s and up until 1998, the Russian and Iranian positions were very close on another important issue for both countries: the legal status of the Caspian Sea. The two governments effectively resisted plans – promoted above all by Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan – to divide the world's largest lake. Moscow and Tehran wished to jointly use Caspian resources.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and until about 1998, Russia shared Iran's position on the legal status of the Caspian Sea: it supported its recognition as a lake and the establishment of a legal regime which avoided dividing the Caspian Sea and required the Caspian countries to jointly use all resources. Following this policy, on 2 December 1996 Russia and Iran founded a joint oil firm. This changed when Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement to divide the seabed in their sectors of the Caspian Sea on 6 July 1998. From then on, Russia would resolve issues related to the legal status of the Caspian Sea on a bilateral basis.

This trend continued in the early 2000s, and Russia focused especially on regulating issues with its direct neighbours in the Caspian: Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. After concluding an agreement on the delimitation of the Caspian seabed with Kazakhstan on 6 July 1998, Moscow also signed a protocol to the agreement with Astana on 13 May 2002. On 23 September 2002 Russia concluded an agreement with Azerbaijan on the delimitation of the Sea's Russian and Azerbaijani sectors. The signing on 13 May 2003 of a tripartite agreement regarding the intersection of delimitation lines meant that Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan had effectively completed the division of the northern part of the lake.

The Kremlin let Tehran fight alone for the southern part of the lake, although Russia continued attending multilateral talks on the lake's legal status. When the lake had mostly been divided, Russia and Iran cooperated only on other, less critical issues, such as military presence on the Caspian Sea. Another issue on which Moscow and Tehran agreed was the laying of pipelines underwater in the Caspian Sea. Until the mid-2010s, Russia and Iran insisted that such projects be approved by all five Caspian countries, while other nations, like Turkmenistan, argued that they should only be the matter of the countries with zones

of jurisdiction that such pipelines would traverse. At the same time, Tehran joined other Caspian countries in asking Russia to abolish transit quotas from the Caspian Sea via Russia's internal waterways, which had existed since 1994, and consolidate the norm of unlimited access into a convention (Kommersant 14.07.2016).

6.7.6. The North-South International Transport Corridor

On 12 September 2000, Russia, Iran and India signed a trilateral agreement on the construction of a Transport Corridor called North-South (ITCNS). However, the Russian parliament ratified it only on 27 February 2002, and it entered into force on 16 May 2002. To launch the cooperation, Russia's Transportation Minister Sergei Frank visited Iran on 16-17 April 2002.

After this, not very much occurred until 20 May 2004, when at a trilateral meeting in Moscow of the directors of railway companies from Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan concluded an agreement on establishing an international consortium to construct a new railway as part of the North-South International Transport Corridor. On 3 May 2005, Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan signed an agreement on construction of the railway line Qazvin-Rasht-Enzeli-Astara. It started in 2007 and was still ongoing in 2015. Nevertheless, well into the 2010s “technological difficulties” have limited the transportation of containers in the ITCNS solely to traffic between Russia and Iran (Portnews.ru 24.08.2014). Given the relatively small trade between the two countries, this was just a small part of the initial plan, which included extension to India.

In a parallel development, in December 2004 Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan signed an agreement on uniting the energy systems of Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan, which would stipulate their synchronisation and require them to operate in a parallel regime. The agreement has not been implemented.

6.7.7. The Gas Exporting Countries Forum

The Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) was established at the 1st Meeting of Ministers of interested nations in Tehran on 19-20 May 2001. However, for years it remained nothing more than an informal club. On 29 January 2007 during a meeting with Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Igor Ivanov, the Leader of Iran Ali Khamenei suggested the establishment of a “gas OPEC” (Zygar' 2007).

Khamenei, referring to the fact that about a half of the world's gas resources are apparently located in Iran and Russia, emphasised that “by helping each other, these two countries can

build a foundation for an organisation in the sphere of gas cooperation, like OPEC” (Jaame Jam 03.10.1387).

The 7th ministerial meeting in Moscow on 23 December 2008 approved a charter, introduced fixed membership and established the structure of the international organisation; it officially started to function on 30 September 2009. The GECF held three summits: in 2011 in Doha, Qatar, in 2013 in Moscow and in 2015 in Tehran.

By late 2015, GECF came to include Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela as members, and Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman and Peru as observers. However, the contradictory policies pursued by key GECF members since the early 2010s – especially Russia, Iran and Qatar – complicated the activities of the GECF. These divergences started around 2011 with the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring and increased when civil war broke out in Syria.

Iranian elites probably had their doubts about the possibility of cooperation with Moscow over natural gas. For example, Akbar Torkan, Counsellor to the Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies of the Expediency Discernment Council, during one of the lowest points of Iranian-Russian relations in October 2012, called Russia and Qatar “the countries which are the principal competitors [*raghib*] for Iran in the [*gas*] sphere” and openly accused them of playing against Iran by describing them as “two gas giants seeking profit [*sudjuyi*] from Iran's failures [*nakomi*]” (Torkan 1391). At any rate, despite the fact that the GECF achieved full-fledged institutionalisation, the organisation remained a “discussion forum” without real leverage over global gas prices in the 2010s (Kasayev 2013).

6.7.8. Interaction in the Middle East

In the Middle East in the 2000s, Russia had few common points with Iran. Even though they both shared an alliance with Syria, these alliances were separate and limited to respective bilateral relations. Moreover, between roughly 1999-2001 Russia and Iran saw another axis to which they had both belonged unravel in the region. Beginning in 1998, the countries believed to be involved in supporting the PKK-led Kurdish guerrilla movement – Russia, Iran, Syria and some others – renounced their support for the PKK.

In the later stages of the civil war in Syria, the two separate alliances that Damascus had maintained with Moscow and Tehran for decades started to converge due to the common interest of both Iran and Russia in preventing the collapse of their Syrian ally. This process culminated in Russia's joining Iran in a military intervention in Syria, the open phase of

which began on 30 September 2015 and aimed at saving the current Syrian government from collapse.

The convergence of Russian and Iranian interests in saving the existing Syrian government was in no way unavoidable. While throughout the 2010s Iran had remained committed to supporting Damascus, in the early 2010s Russia hesitated on whether it ought to support the Syrian government. These re-calculations were a part of an effective review of Russia's Middle Eastern policies which started in 2009 and was linked to the so called “reset” in relations with the US.

In a series of spectacular moves by President Medvedev, in 2010 the Kremlin stopped delivering major arms systems to Iran, halted arms supplies to Libya and helped Western and Arab countries get UN support for the military operation against Gaddafi's government in Libya, effectively facilitating the 2011 fall of another of its long-standing Middle Eastern allies.

Similar developments were underway with regards to Syria in at least the first two years of the civil war in the country (2011-2012). In summer 2012, Moscow decided to dissolve the main tool which the USSR and Russia had applied to provide Damascus with military help: the Apparatus of the Chief Military Adviser. Russia not only halted the transfer to Syria of new military equipment – like the new air defence systems, including the S-300 SAM systems – but even suspended the return to Damascus of Syrian helicopters being overhauled in Russia (Newsru.com 20.07.2012).

During a visit to Tehran in June 2012, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed Moscow's interest in cooperating more closely with Tehran on Syria and Afghanistan with Iranian officials. However, the contact failed to bring about any breakthroughs in Russian-Iranian relations. Cooperation on major international issues would contribute to a new rise in Russian-Iranian cooperation after 2013, but this would occur only after the international crisis over Iran's nuclear programme deescalated.

Russian policies in the Middle East started to change in 2013. Moscow resisted the plans of the US and its allies to launch a military operation against the Syrian government after chemical weapons of some sort were used by an unidentified actor during hostilities in August 2013. However, as Russia had helped remove chemical weapons from Syria, Russian officials suspected the US of using the situation to strengthen the armed Syrian opposition and began looking for countermeasures (RBK 30.09.2015).

Contacts with Tehran and Damascus regarding possible trilateral action began at this time.

Thus, in January 2014, the foreign ministers of the three countries met in Moscow before the international conference Geneva-2 to discuss the Syrian crisis. Regional developments forced the Kremlin to develop a greater appreciation of its Iranian ally. The Kremlin intensified its rhetoric about the necessity of involving Iran in international talks over the situations in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, in September 2014 Foreign Minister Lavrov called Iran “a natural ally” of Russia in its struggle against the emerging threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) in the Middle East (Vzglyad 15.09.2014).

Moscow started to make plans – in some kind of cooperation with Tehran – to begin military intervention in Syria before Iran signed the Comprehensive Joint Plan of Action (CJPOA) on its nuclear programme in July 2015, that is, at the time a solution to the Iranian nuclear crisis was already in sight. However, the final consultations between Russia and Iran started only after the CJPOA was signed. The commander of the al-Qods Corpse Qassem Soleimani travelled to Moscow to coordinate it (Reuters 06.10.2015).

By autumn 2015, Russia had amassed troops in Syria and on 30 September it officially launched the operation. Russia committed to provide air force while Iran was to provide special forces, advisors and some technical personnel and Iran’s allies (Iraq and Hezbollah) were to provide infantry. In addition to launching the joint operation in Syria, with Iranian mediation Russia also established closer contacts with the Iraqi government with regard to intelligence sharing; this access to the Iraqi government was important to Moscow, as it had lost access after the US toppled Saddam Hussein, a long-term Soviet and Russian partner, in 2003.

6.7.9. Interaction between the Armed Forces of Iran and Russia

The early 2000s saw increasing and unprecedented interactions between the armed forces of Russia and Iran, which resulted in contacts and joint exercises, providing access for the Russian military. This eventually led to joint military intervention in Syria at the end of the period in 2015.

Tehran began by granting access to its territory to the Russian army. On 14 May 2003, for the first time ever, Russia sent its four Tu-95MS and two Tu-160 strategic bombers to an area of the Indian Ocean via the Caspian Sea to conduct an exercise involving launching cruise missiles (Kh-55 or Kh-65). Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov emphasised that the exercise was unique and even the Soviet army never did anything of the kind. Moreover, according to him, it was not a coincidence that the exercise was conducted at

the same time as the Russian parliament was ratifying the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions (SORT, also known as the Treaty of Moscow) with the US (Kommersant 15.05.2003).

The Chief Commander of Russia's Air Force, Vladimir Mikhailov, insisted that the bombers fly through the airspace of two CIS countries, Afghanistan, and Pakistan on its way to the Indian Ocean (Nezavisimaya gazeta 23.05.2003). However, another well informed Russian media source, *Vedomosti daily*, quoted an anonymous officer of Russia's Air Force Command as saying: “[the bombers] flew from the Engels airbase in Saratov Province via Iran to the Arabian Sea.” The Iranian Foreign Ministry and the US State Department declined to comment on the matter when approached by *Vedomosti*.

The issue remains unclear. If overfly really took place it would be an extraordinary development for both Iran and Russia. This would mean that for the first time Iran had allowed Russian strategic bombers to fly through its territory. Before this, the usual practice had been that only allies of the Soviet Union and Russia permitted Soviet/Russian strategic bombers to fly over their territories.

A prominent Russian defence expert working with the Carnegie Endowment, Alexandr Pikayev, also assumed that the flight had passed through Iranian airspace. He commented that Russia and Iran used the exercise to send signals to multiple different actors at once. Thus, Moscow communicated to NATO that it felt that the main threat to Russia's security was not the West. It made clear to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia that the Russian Air Force could reach them if they resorted to supporting Islamic extremists, and finally, the Kremlin signalled to Washington that Russia viewed its interests in the Persian Gulf as vital and Russia's military was capable of reaching the region with the cooperation of neighbouring states. Tehran was also sending a message to the US: Iran – seeing itself surrounded by US forces in the region – feared becoming the next target of an American invasion. Given this factor it had more of an interest in security cooperation with Russia.

On 29 October - 1 November 2007 for the first time in thirty years Russian navy ships of the Caspian Flotilla visited Iranian Enzeli port (Krasnaya Zvezda 08.11.2007). As relations between Moscow and Tehran worsened after Russia joined the international sanctions introduced against Iran, interactions between the Russian and Iranian militaries were interrupted as well. A squadron of the Iranian Army's Naval Forces stationed in the Caspian Sea went to Russia in 2013 (Tir 1392 AH). A squadron of Russian navy ships visited Iran in 2014 (1393 AH) and again in August 2015.

The 2015 visit involved two Russian corvettes, which came to Enzeli for three days and

took part in joint sea exercises. From the Iranian side, participants included the Damavand frigate (which had by then just recently been included into the Iranian Naval Forces in March 2015), the Paykan and Joshan missile boats, and a helicopter. Thus, 200 Iranian naval personnel and 150 Russian naval personnel took part in the drill. The exercises, which were held on the “20% of waters [*of the Caspian Sea*] belonging to Iran”, aimed at “increasing interaction, boosting battle capacities, better knowledge of forces, and development of cooperation.” (Hamshahri 21.05.1394)

6.8. Major Issues of Strategic Cooperation and Competition between Ukraine, Belarus and Iran at Regional and International Levels

6.8.1. Iran as an Alternative to Russian Energy Sources

The Ukrainian government began its attempts to bring Iranian oil – and probably to a lesser extent natural gas – as an alternative to Russian-supplied energy sources immediately after its independence. After August 1991 the collapse of Soviet state structures accelerated. Under these new circumstances, the president of the Russian Republic, Boris Yeltsin, who had previously sided with the union republics against the Union's centre, changed his stance. He now struggled to keep the union republics, especially Ukraine and Kazakhstan, in a kind of association dominated by Russia (Smith 1991: 656-658).

This triggered a swift reaction from Kyiv. On 25 October 1991 the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada adopted the Ordinance “On Main Directions of Ukraine's Economic Policy after Independence”, which defined organising deliveries of Iranian gas to Ukraine as a priority task. The act essentially supported Armenia's proposition to construct a transcontinental gas pipeline in cooperation with other Soviet republics running from Iran to Europe. The pipeline would pass through Ukrainian territory (Borysfen Intel 2015).

Even prior to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries on 2 January 1992, Ukraine and Tehran signed a Memorandum of Understanding on economic and industrial cooperation. This was followed by a trilateral agreement on 7 January signed by Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Iran on cooperation in the oil and gas industry.

According to a protocol also signed on 7 January, Iran expressed its willingness to deliver 5m tons of oil by tankers to Ukraine (Odessa haven) and increase that volume to 12m tons by 1994. Tehran also offered Ukraine a loan of \$30m for purchasing oil (Borysfen Intel 2015).

A Ukrainian official which participated in the contacts with Tehran explained the details of

these talks thus:

“Realising that Boris Yeltsin had chosen a "gas tap" policy for political blackmailing, I started to look for alternative sources of oil and gas. With the help of Azerbaijani comrades I got access to major Iranian representatives and started to negotiate. I even made one illegal flight: our Antonov plane was nearly shot down after the Russian command ordered air defence units to destroy the aircraft. Thank God, we were able to flee. In Baku I managed to meet relevant ministers and the President of Azerbaijan, and they were willing to allow oil and gas supplies to pass through their territory on their way to Ukraine. We signed contracts. I made sure that then President Leonid Kravchuk agreed with me. Leonid Kravchuk paid a state visit to Tehran and signed an agreement. But Russia did not like Ukraine developing too independent a policy. Under pressure from Moscow, I was sent away as an ambassador” (Sheremeta 2001).

By May 1992, Iran claimed to have established a joint venture with Ukraine and Azerbaijan to construct a gas pipeline from Iran to Azerbaijan and further on to Russia and Ukraine with an extension to European countries. Iran and Ukraine owned 45 percent each of the joint venture, with Azerbaijan holding the remaining ten percent (Megalli 1992).

Speaking to MEES bulletin in June 1992, an Iranian official confirmed that the joint venture responsible for the construction of the gas pipeline had been established together by Iran and Ukraine, and all agreements had been finalised. After the completion in 1996 of the first phase of the Ukrainian project, the pipeline should have been capable of transporting 25bcm/year (MEES 1992). In addition, Kyiv and Tehran discussed possible construction of an oil pipeline to deliver Iranian petroleum to Ukraine and Western Europe.

In July 1992, Ukraine signed an agreement with Iran and Azerbaijan concerning preparation the gas pipeline's construction. Preliminary estimates put the cost of the project at \$12bn. This meant that Ukraine and Iran had to contribute \$5.5 billion each. This was an absolutely fantastic sum, especially for crisis-stricken Ukraine, and according to Aghazadeh, international 'financial sources' had to be attracted to construct the pipeline (Smolansky 1995: 72). Only in February 1993 did the Ukrainian government provide \$1.8m to the state-owned firm Ukrhaz to finance the Ukrainian part of the joint Iranian-Azerbaijani-Ukrainian enterprise in charge of the project.

By the second half of 1990s, Kyiv had got involved in several pipeline construction projects to bring Middle Eastern or Caspian energy resources to Ukraine and via Ukraine to Europe. Ukraine had concluded several agreements on the following routes:

- Iran- Azerbaijan-Russia-Ukraine (oil and gas)
- Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey-Europe (gas)
- Kuwait-Turkey (oil)
- Turkey-Ukraine (oil)
- Azerbaijan-Georgia-Ukraine (oil) (Smolansky 1996: 178)

At any rate, plans launched in the 1990s produced few results and during a January 2001 visit to Kyiv Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi tried to raise the issue once more. Kharrazi claimed that the issue of transporting energy resources from Iran to Europe was a new one as it was different from the agreements which had occurred earlier, and the routes were also different (Iran to Armenia or Azerbaijan and Georgia and then to Ukraine).

As Ukrainian Foreign Minister Zlenko maintained: "there is an understanding that we shall negotiate with the EU." Negotiations were thus not immediately forthcoming. Speaking about possible US opposition to new developments in Ukrainian-Iranian cooperation and the possible use of a new pipeline from Iran to counter Russia's plans to construct a gas pipeline circumventing Ukraine, Zlenko said:

"This is a purely economic issue. What drives us is our national interests and the development needs of our economy. Therefore, I do not believe that any third party can be unhappy with that. As for Russia, we do not in any way regard possible projects as countering Russia's plans to construct a new gas pipeline circumventing Ukraine. But economics is economics. We are looking for partners where it is more profitable."
(Vytyahy z pres-konferentsii... 2001)

Various Ukrainian governments – including Western-leaning ones – remained interested in energy cooperation with Tehran. In an address to the Ukrainian government in April 2005, new President Viktor Yushchenko announced that "the main assignment" for the Prime Minister and the Minister of Energy would be attaining "the energy independence of Ukraine in the widest sense of the word" (Viter et al. 2006: 1). Plans to develop new projects with Iran and EU countries occupied a special place among the strategic steps announced by the government of Yushchenko.

In a June 2005 meeting with François Lamoureux, Director-General of the European Commission Directorate-General for Transport and Energy, Yushchenko said that Ukraine could become a transit route for oil and gas from Kazakhstan, Iran, Turkmenistan and other countries to the EU. Trying to diversify energy sources, the Ukrainian Naftohaz Ukrainy

entered negotiations on oil/gas projects in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, focusing mostly on Iran (Viter et al. 2006: 24).

Generally speaking, Kyiv's attempts to play a transit role in supplying energy to European nations were not doomed in either the 2000s or earlier in the 1990s. As long as confrontation between Iran and Western countries and especially the US remained limited, large global and European companies regularly tried to do business with Iran in the energy sphere. This was true even some time after Mahmud Ahmadinejad's and the Principalists' ascent to power in Iran in the mid-2000s.

As late as 2008, experts forecast a "possible new wave of European investment in Iran's strategically important gas sector" after a renowned Swiss firm signed an agreement with Tehran on supplies of Iranian gas to Europe (Financial Times 30.04.2008). Nevertheless, very little was achieved in establishing new routes for transportation of Iranian energy resources to Europe. Moreover, known projects did not propose using Ukrainian territory for transit and the Ukrainian government and business community apparently failed to integrate their projects with relevant projects of European countries for joint implementation.

On 11-13 July 2005, the Secretary of the Council for National Security and Defence of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, visited Iran. According to insider reports, an initiative to construct a gas pipeline running through Iran-Armenia-Georgia-Ukraine-EU and bypassing Russia had been discussed in the new political context brought about by the Colour Revolutions. Thus:

"After their respective democratic revolutions, Ukraine and Georgia have demonstrated a strong desire to cooperate and this project signals the new state of relationships. Today, other partners are actively joining the dialogue. Georgia has taken responsibility for negotiations with the Armenian party... Moreover, Iran and Armenia have already begun constructing the gas pipeline, which may be later used for transit and as part of the above-mentioned project." (Viter et al. 2006: 24)

All attempts to bring Iranian oil and natural gas to Ukraine and other European countries via Ukraine failed. These attempts can be divided into two periods: a first phase from the early to mid-1990s and a second phase in the early to mid-2000s interrupted by some years of stagnation. During the first phase, there is a convenient excuse for the lack of success which was Tehran's stance at the time. Reportedly, in the first years of cooperation: "Tehran attempted and failed to drive a wedge between Ukraine on one hand and Turkey and the United States on the other." As a compensation, Iran showed its willingness to

support Ukraine in its disputes with Russia by supplying it with oil and playing on “their [*Ukraine's and Iran's*] common distrust of Russia” and “their shared desire to weaken Russian influence in Transcaucasia and Central Asia” (Smolansky 1996: 181). This policy can be interpreted as doomed as Ukraine pursued a strategic policy of developing contacts with the US and other Western countries.

However, starting in the early 2000s Tehran adopted a new approach which shied away from its previous radical anti-American excesses. This approach also failed to produce results. By the mid-2000s, as Ukraine became ever more integrated with the West and the West entered into more and more confrontations with Iran over its nuclear programme, both countries gave up their attempts to bring Iranian oil and gas to Ukraine and to Europe via Ukraine. As a replacement, in 2003 Kyiv started looking for opportunities to get Iraqi oil, which was considered a feasible plan because of Ukrainian troops' participation in the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq.

6.8.2. Trilateral cooperation of Ukraine, Iran and Turkmenistan

In the mid- and late 1990s Kyiv strived to launch a trilateral cooperation which would help Ukraine and Turkmenistan to diminish their dependence on Russia and help Iran increase its influence in the post-Soviet space. If successful, this trilateral cooperation would have changed the spheres of influence in both Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

This geopolitical endeavour started when on 8-9 April 1995 Ukrainian Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udoenko and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Boris Shikhmuradov visited Iran to explore opportunities for trilateral cooperation. As a result of negotiations, the foreign ministers of the three countries signed the Memorandum on Trilateral Cooperation between Ukraine, Iran and Turkmenistan.

The three countries tried to establish a stable framework for their cooperation. On 24–27 June 1996, the first meeting of the joint Ukrainian-Iranian-Turkmen Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation in Trade, Economy, and Investment convened. The committee drafted the Trilateral Interbank agreement and the Agreement on Development of Trade Economic Cooperation, which stipulated that volumes of trilateral cooperation should reach \$50m a year. In February 1997, the parties decided to increase this goal to \$70m.

However, the project bore few results and apparently came to a complete halt in the late 1990s. When asked about this trilateral collaboration in 2001, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi preferred to ignore the question and his Ukrainian counterpart Zlenko merely said that “certainly, this cooperation ... is possible and we do not rule out such

cooperation. (Vytyahy z pres-konferentsii... 2001)

6.9. Conclusions

As a country neighbouring Iran and a country with wide-sweeping ambitions and policies, Russia interacted with Iran on a long list of geopolitically resonant strategic issues. However, correlations between these interactions and the dynamics of defence-related cooperation have been limited.

Even fewer examples of such a correlation can be found in relations between Iran and Ukraine or Belarus. In brief, defence-related cooperation, and specifically arms deals, did not pave the way for any geopolitical projects, and vice versa.

The only case when such a correlation can be found involved the Russian-Iranian efforts to stabilise Tajikistan, which were accompanied by active Russian-Iranian cooperation in the defence sphere. However, although certain disconnected episodes of Russian-Iranian interaction in Tajikistan could be linked to specific moves by Moscow and Tehran in defence-related cooperation (such as delays with transfer of a submarine), they could also be coincidences as neither the dynamics of defence-related cooperation between these countries nor other similar cases support the idea of a link between Russian-Iranian rapprochement on stabilisation in Tajikistan and the dynamics of bilateral defence-related cooperation.

As far as any geopolitical strategies can be detected or presumed in their policies, Ukraine and Belarus might have considered Iran to be an opportunity to balance against pressure from Russia (Ukraine and Belarus) or also the West (Belarus). However, only Ukraine made any large-scale efforts to involve Iran in geopolitical projects (such as bringing Iranian natural gas and oil to Europe and engaging in trilateral cooperation with Iran and Turkmenistan).

This study made a strong case for a correlation between geopolitical concerns of a given (F)SU state and the quality of its defence-related cooperation with Iran. The Soviet Union and later Russia, as the country located closest to Iran and whose global ambitions and interests on numerous issues and in many localities Iran could threaten or protect, demonstrated more caution when supplying Iran with military equipment, providing related services, and transferring technologies.

The Soviet Union and Russia explicitly limited export of offensive weapons and means of power projection to Iran. It also avoided transferring more advanced technologies there. Ukraine, located farther from Iran and whose ambitions did not require it to interact with

Iran on so many issues, demonstrated willingness to provide offensive weapons and means of power projection, also showing eagerness to transfer more advanced technologies.

It was Russia which interacted most with Tehran on geopolitical issues. The major areas of strategic interaction are summarised in the following Table 15.

Table 15. Major Issues of Strategic Cooperation and Competition between Iran and (F)SU Nations at Regional and International Levels in 1989-2015.

Geopolitical Issue	(F)SU Countries Affected or Involved	Time Period	Type of Interaction	Outcome
Export of Islamic Radicalism	Soviet Union	1989-1991	Cooperation	Successful cooperation on the issue: Iran limited or stopped sponsoring radical groups challenging Soviet interests
Status and Exploitation of the Caspian Sea	Soviet Union	1989-1991	Cooperation	Successful cooperation on the issue
Ending civil war in Tajikistan	Russia	1991-1997	Confrontation in 1991-1993; cooperation in 1993-1997	Success of cooperation
Cooperation in Central Asia	Russia	1991-2015	Competition in 1992-1993, cooperation in 1994 to the early 2000s, increasing divergence of political courses after 2001	Cooperation remained sporadic, Iran achieved few results in the region
Iran's Regional Transit and Leadership Plans	Russia	1991-2015	Confrontation	Iran achieved minimal results, Russian concerns were allayed
Export of Islamic Radicalism	Russia	1991-2015	Confrontation in 1992-1993, cooperation in 1994-2015	Successful cooperation on the issue: Iran limited or stopped sponsoring radical groups challenging Russian interests
Caspian Sea	Russia	1991-2015	Cooperation in	Failure of cooperation

Status			1991-1998; divergence of political positions in 1998-2015.	
North-South Transport Corridor	Russia	2000-2015	Cooperation	Failure
Gas Exporting Countries Forum	Russia	2001-2015	Cooperation	Failure
Cooperation in the Middle East	Russia	1991-2015	Informal cooperation on the PKK issue in the 1990s, divergence of political course in 2000-2013, cooperation in 2014-2015.	Partial success in Syria: Assad's Syrian government kept in power.
Bringing Iranian Petroleum and Natural Gas to Eastern and Western Europe	Ukraine	1991 - mid- 2000s	Cooperation	Failure
Trilateral Cooperation Iran-Ukraine- Turkmenistan	Ukraine, Turkmenistan	1995 – the late 1990s	Cooperation	Failure

Note. Assessed and compiled by the author.

There are very few correlations between strategic cooperation and defence-related cooperation in terms of timing. This could be owing to the limited opportunities of Iran, which had little to offer in terms of implementation of joint geopolitical projects. There were exceptions, the most notable being the stabilisation of Tajikistan, but this only underlined the meagre capacities of Tehran as despite its activities there it was not able to continue cooperating with Russia in the region in subsequent years.

Despite numerous episodes of convergence of Russian and Iranian foreign policies, long-term or even simply stable strategic cooperation never emerged. Cooperation on geopolitical and strategic issues between Ukraine and Iran was even more unstable. No major cases of such cooperation with Tehran were detected in the case of Belarus.

7. Iran-(F)SU Defence-Related Cooperation and Third Parties

Actions of third parties with regard to Iran-(F)SU defence-related cooperation attempted to halt, reduce, limit or modify defence-related interaction between Iran and the (F)SU. These measures were undertaken by states (US, Israel and some Arab countries), international organisations (the UN), and unspecified actors most probably associated with the governments of third countries.

Third parties concerned about defence-related cooperation between Iran and the (F)SU nations resorted not only to sanctions, which became the most publicised method of influencing defence-related interaction, but also to political pressure. Third parties also provided alternatives to cooperation with Iran, and while the evidence is circumstantial and provides no ultimate proof, sometimes even resorted to covert action against those involved in Iran-(F)SU defence-related cooperation, including use of lethal force.

Responding to American concerns over Soviet weapon transfers to Iran in summer 1989, Soviet officials responded: “On our side the rapprochement to Iran is definitely not understood as a development which occurs at the expense of third countries” (Halbach 1989a: 21).

In his study of Soviet- and Russian-Iranian relations from 1979-2009, John W. Parker argued that as Moscow developed relations with Tehran, it pursued its own concerns and priorities and took little notice of the US agenda. Thus, Moscow was more concerned than Washington about the 1992-97 civil war in Tajikistan, and conversely, Washington paid much more attention to the 1990-91 confrontation with Iraq over Kuwait than Moscow, which hardly saw it as a key policy priority (Parker 2009).

Russian officials in the early 1990s seem not to have fully realised the importance of the West, and particularly the US, for bilateral relations with Iran. In 1993, after offering Iran a “strategic partnership,” Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev boasted: “The negotiations with Iranian leaders have shown that we can have a dialogue with them not only without switching to an anti-Western, anti-American tone, but even vice versa – without hiding our alliance-based relations with the West.” (Izvestiya 01.04.1993)

Nevertheless, the global role of the US did not allow for the successful pursuit of such policies while ignoring Washington. According to an Iranian embassy employee, Russian officials understood it as early as in the 1990s, Evgeny Primakov, the first chief of Russian

Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and later the Russian Foreign Minister, reportedly was sure that “if Iran to some degree improves its relations with the US, it will help Russia as well, because in that case the latter can better cooperate with Iran (Mahdiyan 2014: 99).

7.1. Political and Economic Pressure and Incentives for post-Soviet States to Reduce or Halt Cooperation with Iran

Political and economic pressure and incentives aimed at convincing post-Soviet countries to renounce defence-related cooperation with Iran seems to have been a stable factor since the mid-1990s. Pressure was exerted first and foremost by the United States and Israel, but some Arab countries participated as well. Most probably, a very large part of this pressure never became publicly known.

Alternatives offered by third parties in exchange for renouncing cooperation with Iran can be regarded as a type of political and economic pressure of a mostly affirmative, positive nature. Some of these alternatives were explicit: third parties expressly offered projects or benefits to a post-Soviet nation on the condition that it renounce or modify its cooperation with Tehran. Other alternatives more implicitly directed (F)SU nations away from Iran; third parties proposed projects which would negate or obviate the possibility of preserving cooperation with Tehran.

In some cases, it is safe to assume the existence of multilateral attempts by third parties to halt cooperation between Iran and post-Soviet states. US cables published by Wikileaks reveal that Israel and rich Arab monarchies also contributed to making Moscow disassociate itself from Iran. In one of them, US diplomats explicitly emphasised that getting Russia to support harsher actions against Iran required the coordinated strategy of US friends and allies, including Israel and Saudi Arabia (Der Spiegel 29.11.2010).

This was not only achieved by threatening the Kremlin with consequences, as Arab countries could promise post-Soviet states attractive alternatives to their collaboration with Iran. Thus, the Saudis negotiated the purchase of Russian weapons for years. It would be a simplification to assert that all efforts by third parties to stop or limit (F)SU cooperation with Iran were one-sided and involved unidirectional pressure to persuade post-Soviet states. It is safe to assume that at least in some cases these interactions were reciprocated and even caused by intentional actions of post-Soviet nations.

As an influential Russian periodical put it: “Let us not forget that by exporting weapons, Russia can get dividends in international politics as well: delivery of weapons to this or that country can dramatically change the balance of power in a region.” (Kommersant

Vlast' 06.06.2016) In other words, it can bargain with third countries interested in preserving the existing balance of power and get some benefits in exchange for non-delivery or changing the delivery details and conditions.

7.1.1. US Pressure and Incentives Aimed at Making Russia Stop Cooperation with Iran

The issue of Soviet and post-Soviet defence-related cooperation with Iran became a topic of discussion between Washington and Moscow as early as the late 1980s. It remained on the agenda of respective bilateral relations until the mid-2010s.

Washington's efforts to increase pressure on (F)SU nations seemed to play into a wider strategy of expanding efforts to halt arms supplies from Western and developing countries to Iran in the 1980s (e.g., Operation Staunch launched by the US during the Iran-Iraq war). Anthony Cordesman described how in the 1980s Washington applied "overt action" to halt arms supplies to Iran. Such action involved escalating measures against parties involved in providing Tehran with necessary military equipment and material:

"The best first approach to foreign governments will always be quiet demarches designed to persuade them not to sell arms to Iran. The next step will be one of tacit embarrassment: quietly leaking all the details of their sales, [...] something that could have a crippling effect on future trade with the Arab world. The final step will be a formal white paper or report to the United Nations providing a full history of every transaction in every embarrassing detail. Few nations, at least in the West, are then likely to continue the commerce that makes this war [Iran-Iraq conflict] possible." (Los Angeles Times 22.01.1987)

The American position on (F)SU nations' defence-related cooperation with Iran was shaped by several factors. First, it was determined by general strategic calculations of the US government and its possible worries concerning the implications of Iran strengthening for the security of American allies and clients in the region (especially Israel, but also Saudi Arabia) as well as for the regional balance of power and security of oil shipments in the Persian Gulf. Second, the American position was determined by legislation adopted by US congress aimed at dealing with, *inter alia*, Iran's purchasing of military equipment, technologies and expertise abroad.

After the US legislature adopted the 1992 Iran-Iraq Arms Non-proliferation Act, which placed sanctions on persons or legal entities involved in "any transfer of goods or technology to Iraq or Iran whenever there is reason to believe that such transfer could

contribute to that country's acquisition of chemical, biological, nuclear, or advanced conventional weapons” (US Congress 1992), Russian government and business had to take into consideration possible US reaction to deals with Iran .

The first known case of Washington reacting to a Soviet arms deals with Iran was in 1989. On 22 June the US Government – responding to a successful visit by Iran's Chairman of Parliament Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to the Soviet Union – warned the USSR about major weapons sales to Iran (Halbach 1989a: 20-21). Many of the protests from the US regarding Soviet arms deals with Iran in 1990-1991 more than likely took place behind closed doors. Reportedly, “U.S. officials knew of the sales all along but didn't object publicly because they concluded it was in the West's interest to see Iran strengthened enough to counterbalance Iraq” (Chicago Tribune 19.01.1992).

American political protests against Russian arms sales to Iran and its pressure on various governments to refuse to deal with Tehran increased after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. January 1992 saw the first attempts to tie US aid to Russia with Moscow halting arms supplies. A bipartisan group of 29 US Congress members urged the White House to make assistance to former Soviet countries dependent on them cancelling arms contracts with Tehran and imposing stricter export controls on conventional and nuclear military technology. They also sent a letter to Russia's president Boris Yeltsin asking him for a commitment to cease arms sales to Iran (Chicago Tribune 24.01.1992).

This pressure from the US in the first half of the 1990s was keenly felt in Russia, whose government badly needed it to survive and keep the country functioning. Even relatively liberal-minded representatives of the Russian elite pointed out that the US believed that because it had granted Russia certain economic aid, it had the right to “tell Russia what deals it could conclude with India or Iran, how to behave itself in the Middle East or in its disputes with the Baltic Republics” (Light 1996: 85). The efficacy of this sort of pressure depended on the economic situation in the post-Soviet space and was already diminishing by the late 1990s.

Nevertheless, the theme of Russian-Iranian military cooperation was repeatedly discussed by US legislators throughout the 1990s (e.g., Vedomosti 09.10.2000). In the 1990s and 2000s they passed a number of legal acts inhibiting defence-related cooperation of foreign organisations and entities with Iran. Even when debates did not result in adoption of such laws, they served as a tool to put pressure on Russia and other foreign countries.

The US executive branch was also very quick to react to Russian-Iranian relations in the defence sphere. In 1992-1993, during several meetings, both US President Bush and

President Clinton reportedly urged their Russian counterpart to halt sales of conventional weapons to Tehran (Washington Post 28.09.1994). The issue of Russian arms deals with Iran was raised during meetings of the bilateral Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission launched in 1993 to promote Russo-American cooperation in various fields. However, for some time the vagueness of the term “advanced conventional weapons” and Washington's desire not to add to President Yeltsin’s problems apparently precluded a harsh American response to the ongoing cooperation between Moscow and Tehran.

US officials started to object to Russian arms deals with Iran very publicly in the beginning of 1994. For the first time, during a summit of US and Russian leaders on 15 January 1994, they announced their disagreements over Iran and Russia's continuing arms sales to Tehran (Los Angeles Times 15.01.1994).

Moscow haggled over the price of its cooperation with US policies as the Kremlin was interested in rapid integration into international organisations, associations and regimes. In the early 1990s Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev argued that his country was continuing to deliver defence-related products and services to Iran because there was not yet a new international weapons-technology export regime which could replace COCOM of NATO. In addition, Russia had not been invited to take part in developing this new regime (Malcolm 1996: 144-145). Moscow hoped that by joining this new regime it would get access to Western technologies and Western markets for its own technologies and products, including defence-related ones.

By autumn of 1994, Americans tried to resolve the issue by concluding an appropriate formal agreement with Russia. At the US-Russian summit in September 1994, Russian president Yeltsin pledged to complete already existing deals on conventional weaponry with Iran and not conclude new sales contracts with that country, “but no other new contracts, no other new supplies, no other new shipments of weapons and weapons goods will be shipped” (Los Angeles Times 29.09.1994).

In exchange for that commitment, US officials promised to help compensate for Russian losses incurred because of disruption of deals with Iran through American deals with Russia in other fields (Washington Post 28.09.1994). US and Russian leaders also publicly announced that Russia would join the body that would replace the COCOM as a regulator of arms technologies exports.

However, US officials immediately pointed out that the Russian commitment contained “huge loopholes” and President Clinton said: “we reached a conceptual agreement in principle” yet “we cannot say that it is resolved.” The US government complained that

Moscow did not announce a time frame for contracts with Iran, nor did it declare what was still to be supplied and even what was being supplied at the moment. As the media commented: “the arms sale issue remains a major stumbling block preventing full normalization of economic relations between the United States and Russia” (Los Angeles Times 29.09.1994).

The American government made a major effort to persuade Russian to renounce defence cooperation with Iran as on 30 June 1995, during the fifth session of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission a “strictly confidential” deal (as the text of the document defines it) was concluded and formalised in the form of an aide-memoire. Russian and American officials announced this major deal but until 2000 its specific content remained undisclosed.

Relying on an aide-memoire, also called an “executive agreement”, allowed the US executive branch to avoid dealing with domestic opposition to the arrangement, as such documents do not require legislative ratification. It thus did not carry the weight of a law or treaty, and any party could unilaterally withdraw from it without prior notice or penalty.

According to the aide-memoire, Russia pledged not to sign any new arms contracts with Iran and only deliver the weapons specified in a classified annex (one Kilo-class submarine, 160 T-72 tanks, 600 armoured personnel carriers, anti-ship mines, cluster bombs, long-range guided torpedoes and other munitions for submarines and tanks). In exchange, the US government would “take appropriate steps to avoid any penalties to Russia that might otherwise arise under domestic law with respect to the completion of the transfers.” Washington also promised to support Russia in joining international arms-trading organisations and to make steps towards removing Russia from the list of countries ineligible to receive American weapons or technical assistance.

Furthermore, the US agreed to help Russia's defence industry find markets and partners, and Washington would guarantee that its own Middle Eastern customers would not transfer arms bought from the US to countries bordering Russia. This last point was usually interpreted as an attempt by Moscow to prevent transfers of arms from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern allies of the US to Islamic fundamentalists in southern post-Soviet republics (Broder 2000).

Certainly, the Gore-Chernomyrdin Memorandum was not an isolated agreement. At the same time, Russia was able to join the Wassenaar Arrangement, which replaced the COCOM. In the 1990s to the mid-2000s Russian defence industries hoped to find new technologies and new markets in the West and among its allies. Russian firms even tried to

offer products specifically-designed for the West which adhered to Western standards (such as engines for South African military aircraft, helicopters for the Turkish army, a joint Russian-Israeli project on designing an AWACS aircraft for India, etc.).

The US executive branch largely managed to keep the 1995 deal secret from Congress. Seeing continuing Russo-Iranian defence cooperation, the latter amended the Gore-McCain law in 1996 to provide a legal basis for sanctions against “any supplier of arms to nations that sponsor terrorism, not just weapons sales that upset regional stability”, as the 1992 law had required (Broder 2000).

There was constant and fierce discussion among experts and officials on how comprehensively parties involved were implementing the Gore-Chernomyrdin agreement. Even after the agreement, the US had to intervene to stop specific deals between Moscow and Tehran. Thus, in 1998, US officials succeeded in receiving commitments from Russia not to provide Iran with missile technologies (Vlasov 1998).

How and whether many of the measures related to the Gore-Chernomyrdin agreement were implemented is hard to verify. Middle Eastern nations did indeed avoid exporting arms to the countries bordering Russia, Russia was rapidly able to join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 1995, and the US continued financing many projects involving Russia's defence industry and research institutions.

On the other hand, Washington complained that Moscow did not live up to its end of the deal on arms trade with Iran. “The deadline passed with no sign of a halt to such sales, despite repeated complaints late last year and this year to senior Russian officials by Mr. Gore, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott.” Moreover, Albright openly threatened the Kremlin with US sanctions against Russian organisations, entities, and persons involved in such business (Broder 2000)

Until the late 1990s, Washington continually tried to halt Russian cooperation with Iran without resorting to sanctions, although there was already a precedent of applying them to Russian entities (for cooperation with India). As the US government came to suspect that Moscow was not following its part of the 1995 deal, it resorted to sanctions as an additional measure. The deal itself proved untenable in domestic political terms, both in America and Russia. In the US it even became a scandal during the 2000 presidential campaign (Wall Street Journal 18.10.2000).

Throughout 1990s, US government agencies publicly proposed cancelling joint programmes with Russia because of Russian defence-related exports to Iran. In particular,

State Department officials tried to link Russia's banning military cooperation with Iran with a project to use Russia's Proton launch system to bring American satellites into space. The latter mattered for Moscow: according to a 1993 agreement Russia was allowed to conduct 20 such commercial launches until 2001; it was eager to continue such cooperation and increase the number of launches (Vedomosti 09.10.2000).

A different time, Washington offered Moscow a package of economic, technological and financial incentives at a time when the US government was struggling to boost relations and strategic interaction with Russia in 2009 – 2012. Specifically, it tried to get Russia to cooperate with the US and its allies on the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, military build-up and international ambitions.

This period, which in the US became known as the “Russian Reset”, involved both diplomatic events and general attempts to review the problems in bilateral relations with Russia or certain strategic arrangements (like the review of US plans to install a missile defence system in Europe, considered below). The “Reset” involved specific deals, two of which stood out for their significance in persuading the Kremlin to abandon its cooperation with Tehran. These deals targeted the two major segments of Russian-Iranian cooperation: nuclear energy and the arms industry. Washington was able to provide alternatives to these two branches of the Russian economy, which were the most interested in collaborating with Iran.

The first deal involved the Russian government-owned corporation Rosatom, which with American consent took over a Canadian company controlling up to a fifth of US uranium deposits. In this way, Russia became a leading player in the global uranium markets (New York Times 23.04.2015).

The second deal related to the US supporting the Russian government's attempts to intensify the technological and economic development of Russia. These attempts involved creating the Skolkovo Innovation Centre, a conglomeration of research facilities and innovative technology firms designed to facilitate the transfer of the latest discoveries and technologies in the fields of information technology, biomedicine, energy, satellite and space technology, and nuclear technology to Russia.

As the *Wall Street Journal* put it, the US State Department “worked aggressively to attract U.S. investment partners and helped the Russian State Investment Fund, Rusnano, identify American tech companies worthy of Russian investment” by facilitating, for instance, visits to Moscow by prominent American venture entrepreneurs. These efforts by the State Department were fruitful, and soon a number of leading American technology

corporations, notably Google, Intel and Cisco, invested in Skolkovo (The Wall Street Journal 31.07.2016).

These new partnerships provided Russian firms with an alternative to actual or potential projects with Iran. Skolkovo managed to help these firms find more than just alternative civilian projects. According to a report issued by the U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Program at Fort Leavenworth: “the Skolkovo Foundation has [...] been involved in defense-related activities since December 2011, when it approved the first weapons-related project—the development of a hypersonic cruise missile engine.” (EUCOM Strategic Foresight 29.07.2013: 5)

Finally, during periods of tense relations between Washington and Moscow, the US played another role – indirect but still important – as a geopolitical competitor whose policies regarding Iran generated a corresponding reaction from the Kremlin. As Aleksei Gromyko put it: “The lessons learned [*by Moscow*] when the Americans ... lured Communist China away from the Soviets in the 1970s [...] cannot but force Russia to do everything to keep Iran this time” (Gromyko 1998). For the largest part of the period under consideration, relations between Tehran and Washington certainly remained too complicated to make such a scenario a real option.

7.1.2. Russia's Cooperation with Iran and Major Issues of National Security (European Missile System and Arms Reduction)

In the late 2000s, Moscow attempted to patch up its relations with the West, especially the US, after they deteriorated because of NATO expansion and the war in Georgia. The “Reset” with the US became a way to achieve that aim. Commenting on the worsening relations between Moscow and Tehran caused by the Kremlin's decision not to supply S-300 SAM systems to Iran, Russian foreign policy veteran Aleksei Pushkov noticed that Moscow had simply prioritised improving its relations with the US and rapprochement with Washington and sacrificed its relations with Iran in exchange (Golos Ameriki 18.11.2010).

There is quite a broad consensus in scholarly and analytical circles that in the late 2000s and early 2010s, the US used the issue of the so-called European missile-defence system as an incentive to convince Russia to halt its cooperation with Iran in the most sensitive areas.

Less clear is how Washington employed the issue of a new strategic arms treaty with Russia to the same end. Nevertheless, both these issues were perceived by the Kremlin as vital for Russian security and they were near the top of the agenda of any major US-

Russian talks. Moreover, the issue of a new strategic arms treaty was usually considered in connection with the European missile-defence system. There are hence good reasons to assume that Washington employed the issue of the new strategic arms treaty as a bargaining chip to influence Russia's cooperation with Iran.

As with other Iran-related issues of international politics at that time, Washington resorted to these strategic issues primarily to modify the Russian government's behaviour towards Iran's nuclear programme. However, other issues, especially arms supplies, were most probably involved too. Whether this resulted in direct or indirect influence on arms supplies, and which particular deals were affected, remains a moot point. That said, given the context of the time, most probably deliveries of the S-300 SAM systems and Russia's intended or unintended involvement in Iran's missile and rocket development were affected.

Washington publicised the missile defence project during the times of the Clinton presidency in the 1990s. In the early 2000s, the US moved to cancel the ABM treaty and officially announce its plans for an anti-ballistic missiles system. In addition to the national American system, Washington decided to deploy a missile defence system in Europe as well. This occurred at America's initiative and was perceived as “[*the*] U.S. push for European nations to adopt missile defence plans” (CNN 20.11.2002).

The implementation of the plans started with the 2002 NATO summit in Prague announcing the start of a feasibility study for a Europe-based component of missile defence system. This occurred in a context of widely-publicised international concern over missile programmes of several countries located relatively close to Europe, such as Iraq, Iran, and Libya. Nonetheless, even then these plans were perceived and criticised by Russia as a threat, since the proposed installations located in Eastern Europe could partially nullify Russia's nuclear deterrent in the future.

By 2007, the US and its allies, especially Eastern European countries directly involved in the deployment of the missile defence system facilities, started to draw more concrete plans. By that time, the rationale provided to publicly explain the need for the system was the Iranian missile threat, as other countries suspected of having missile strike capacities had ceased to be considered threats for various reasons. In 2008, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates told Russian officials: “if there were no Iranian missile program, there would be no need for the missile sites [*in Eastern Europe*]” (New York Times 02.03.2009). The system was aimed at interdicting long-range missiles which Iran had yet to acquire, and Moscow constantly criticised it as targeting first of all Russian military capacities, not

Iranian ones.

In 2009, US President Obama discussed the issue in meetings with his counterpart Dmitry Medvedev at least twice. Numerous commentators implied the link between disputes over the missile defence system and Russian cooperation with Iran. Thus, CNN emphasised: “Obama has been seeking a stronger relationship with Russia and better cooperation from the Kremlin to support tough U.N. economic sanctions against Iran if it continues to pursue its nuclear ambitions” (CNN 18.09.2009).

Apparently, just after Obama's election to presidential office, Russia's president Medvedev wrote him a letter with unspecified proposals which most probably dealt with Moscow's wish to improve relations with Washington, the US plan to deploy the missile defence system in Europe, a replacement for the strategic arms treaty expiring in 2009, and opening US supply routes to Afghanistan via Russia. In early February 2009, Obama sent an undisclosed reply to Medvedev. The letter reportedly suggested that the US Government “would back off deploying a new missile defense system in Eastern Europe if Moscow would help stop Iran from developing long-range weapons” (New York Times 02.03.2009).

A kind of deal on the missile-defence system between the US and Russia eventually materialised, and on 17 September 2009 Obama announced a replacement to the system proposed by the previous Bush administration. Among other modifications, the new system would shift from targeting long-range missiles to short- and medium-range missiles.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev welcomed Obama's decision by making a comment which implicitly hinted at a deal involving Russo-Iranian cooperation. Medvedev praised Washington for implementing the deal he made with the US leader: "I discussed this issue with the U.S. president during our meetings in London and Moscow [...] in our joint statement, we agreed to, and set in stone that Russia and the United States will seek to work together to assess the risks of missile proliferation in the world." (CNN 18.09.2009)

At the same time, Russia struggled to reach a new strategic arms agreement with the US. In December 2009, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1) was due to expire, threatening to disrupt the strategic balance and undermine Russia's positions vis-a-vis the US. Apparently, Washington and Moscow reached some agreement on the issue and on 8 April 2010 signed the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START, SNV-3) in Prague.

Commenting on the New START Treaty, Russian military commentator Pavel Felgengauer noted that ratification of the agreement “may be linked to more important issues. Already

in Prague, Obama explicitly demanded that Medvedev join the new sanctions against Iran. If sanctions would be bogged down in the UN Security Council, or if, say, Moscow finally sent Iran the promised six battalions of S-300 for a billion dollar, the ratification of the New START would also be bogged down.” (Novaya gazeta 12.04.2010).

This did not occur and on 9 June 2010 Moscow supported Resolution 1929 in the UN Security Council, which introduced harsh new sanctions against Iran, most notably an arms embargo. Washington also proceeded with ratification of the New START Treaty.

On 16 September 2010 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee supported ratifying New START. On 22 September 2010, Russia's President Medvedev signed a Decree called “On Measures Implementing Resolution No. 1929 of the UN Security Council”. This resulted in the halt of all relatively serious defence-related cooperation between Russian and Iran, notably immediately stopping the delivery of S-300 SAM systems to Iran. On 22 December 2010, the U.S. Senate gave its consent to the ratification of the New START agreement. The ratification process in the US was finalised with the signing of corresponding documents on 2 February 2011 by president Obama.

The US Government apparently continued to use the issue of missile defence later on. In 2012, Obama reportedly promised president Medvedev to deal with the missile defence system in Europe in a more flexible way (CNN 12.05.2016). Russian officials later effectively admitted that their wish to stop plans for the missile defence system in Europe was why they backed talks and agreements on the Iranian nuclear programme.

There are good reasons to believe that the issue of the US missile defence system in Europe affected more than just the Russian position on Iran's nuclear programme and ballistic missiles developments, as reflected in official statements. Moscow also made rapid moves to reduce defence-related cooperation with Tehran on conventional weapons: in a spectacular way with the S-300 SAM system and in more silent way with other weapons.

The logic of this is quite transparent. First, the nuclear issue affected all kinds of interaction with Iran anyway. Second, given the ambiguous character of some of the deals, transfers and cooperation projects that can be qualified as contributing to Iran's ballistic missile programme, Moscow most probably took precautions not to anger Washington. This corresponded with the general inclination of the Kremlin to interpret agreements on limiting cooperation with Iran in the broadest possible way.

7.1.3. US Political Pressure and Incentives for Ukraine and Belarus Concerning their Cooperation with Iran

The US applied pressure combined with incentives to get Ukraine to stop cooperating with Iran on sensitive nuclear and defence matters. Washington intensified its measures in the second half of the 1990s, and they culminated in a kind of major deal between the US and Ukraine in 1998. Although defence-related cooperation between Ukraine and Iran did not stop immediately, it was severely curtailed, especially after a 2005 scandal concerning Ukraine's delivery of cruise missiles to Iran and China. In the 2000s and 2010s, the US government expressed its concern and even applied sanctions against Ukrainian entities, but Washington did not resort to massive interventions to stop Kyiv from dealing with Tehran as it had in the 1990s.

In other words, the intensive US campaign to make Ukraine renounce its cooperation with Iran in the late 1990s largely succeeded. On 6 March 1998, American diplomatic and political pressure on Kyiv culminated when US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Kyiv to finalise a deal on Ukraine halting cooperation with Iran through a meeting with president Leonid Kuchma. As a result, Kuchma had the large firm Turboatom from the Eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv immediately cancel a contract on delivery of turbines for Bushehr nuclear power plant. It is not clear which other cooperation projects were involved, but there are reasons to assume that some defence-related projects were affected. Insiders have implicitly admitted that Ukrainian-Iranian cooperation on various armoured vehicles was halted (Tarasenko 2014). This can be corroborated by the factual lack of meaningful engagement between the Malyshev Tank Factory in Ukrainian Kharkiv and Iran since the early 2000s, and maybe even as early as 1998.

To achieve the 1998 deal, Washington applied a series of threats and incentives, besides pressure during US-Ukrainian talks at different levels. First, prior to a visit by secretary Albright to Ukraine, US Congress withheld the disbursement of half of the \$225 million in aid to Ukraine scheduled for 1998 (Jamestown Foundation 09.03.1998), and US officials expressed their concern over Ukrainian reforms.

Second, Kyiv was promised membership in several Western-dominated international institutions and organisations, which would have opened new prospects for the Ukrainian government and economy. NATO was surely among these, as the subsequent invitation of Ukraine to the 1999 Washington NATO summit proves (Albright 1999). Kyiv was also promised assistance in joining the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which would allegedly help Ukraine get access to new markets for missile and space

technologies. Ukraine was indeed able to join the MTCR in 1998, but it had only limited success in exporting its products, services and technologies.

To compensate Ukraine for losses accrued from giving up its Iranian contract, the US launched the so-called Kharkiv initiative, which was to improve the socio-economic situation in Kharkiv and the region as well as promote economic development in that part of Ukraine and beyond it. As for Belarus, from the mid-1990s Western countries largely lacked opportunities to apply pressure on Minsk and avoided engaging with the country after Alyaksandr Lukashenka was elected president and consolidated his power while launching integration initiatives with Russia.

Besides the US sanctions on Belarusian entities accused of defence-related cooperation with Iran; Israel also put pressure on Belarus to get it stop working with Iran, and there are reasons to assume that some conservative Arab countries also interacted with Minsk in this way.

7.1.4. Israeli Pressure and Incentives to Make Post-Soviet States Stop Cooperation with Iran

While the US, as the global superpower, had more means to stop cooperation between Iran and the (F)SU nations, other countries were more limited in that regard. Israel could resort to diplomatic interventions, offering economic alternatives and punishing those involved in cooperation with Iran by depriving them of Israeli contracts.

The Kremlin, on the whole, was willing to negotiate with Israel about its arms deals in the Middle East. Thus, in 2005, president Putin announced at a meeting with Israeli president Moshe Katsav that the Russian government “takes account of concerns and wishes of our partner and does whatever it can to avoid disrupting the power balance in the region” (Trud 28.04.2005).

In the 2000s, Tel Aviv even managed to launch an ongoing “informal dialogue on arms exports into the region [of the Middle East]” with Moscow. This mechanism appears to have become quite sophisticated, as the Israeli government resorted to interventions from top-level Israeli officials when talks and discussions at lower levels proved futile (Kommersant 28.08.2010a). Cases in point include the supply of Iskander tactical ballistic missile system or Yakhont anti-ship missiles to Syria or S-300 to Iran in the second half of the 2000s.

The Israeli government was very concerned about Russia's weapons sales to Syria and

intervened to stop or limit them frequently and intensively. However, Russian-Iranian defence-related and nuclear cooperation also became a major problem in Russian-Israeli relations by the mid-1990s. It emerged regularly on the agenda of Russian-Israeli negotiations.

Thus, in September 1995 Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin tried to persuade Moscow to renounce its project on construction of a nuclear power plant in Iran. In March 1997 during his visit to Russia, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the issue of Russia supplying Iran not only with nuclear technologies but also with other advanced military technologies (most probably focusing on ballistic missiles). Russian officials denied any wrongdoing in terms of nuclear technology and denied any involvement with Iran's ballistic missiles programme.

Nevertheless, Israel was so concerned with the alleged transfer of Russian missile technology to Iran that in September 1997 Prime Minister Netanyahu froze a major Israeli gas deal with Russia.

Although this may seem to have been a major blow to Russian interests, the deal may not have been finalised anyway. Former Israeli Finance Minister Dan Meridor later revealed details that could indicate that deal was far from concluded. In particular he stated: "some high-ranking members of the Israeli leadership wanted to use the proposed natural gas deal with Russia as a lever to extract a better price on the purchase of natural gas from Egypt" (Freedman 1998: 155, 160, 162); in other words, the gas deal was a mere bargaining chip.

Israeli officials frequently discussed the Iranian issue with Russia later. Indeed, in 2004-2005 Russia began a rapprochement with Israel, which provided Tel Aviv with additional leverage over the Kremlin. Putin even became the first Russian or Soviet leader who went to Israel when he paid a working visit to the country on 27-29 April 2005. Before him, presidents Gorbachev and Yeltsin visited Israel only after they had left office.

Israel intensified its use of political mechanisms in 2006-2010 as external circumstances left Tel Aviv no other choice. On one hand, Iran was increasing its influence in the region starting in the early 2000s (notably in Afghanistan and Iraq and via Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon); the political forces which came to the fore in Iranian politics in the mid-2000s, represented by the new president Mahmud Ahmadinejad, took a harsher line towards Israel. On the other hand, the 2006 war in Lebanon proved how easily Russian arms got into the hands of Hezbollah, and the Israeli government realised the potential danger of the situation.

On 18-19 October 2006, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert visited Moscow. He made explicit Israel's concern over Iran's policies and its nuclear ambitions. Olmert also focused on Lebanon, emphasising to Putin "the importance of implementing a weapons embargo on countries that pass weapons to Hezbollah and on the Syrian and Iranian involvement in Lebanon." Russian officials, however, generally refused to stop arms transfers to Iran and Syria, including a Russian-Iranian deal on a Tor-M1 SAM system, insisting that they were defensive arms (Reuters 19.10.2006). However, Moscow reportedly gave in on more explicitly offensive arms. According to Russian sources, at the request of the Israeli government the Kremlin stopped implementation of the contract on Iskander short-range ballistic missiles signed with Syria in 2005 (Vedomosti 19.09.2016).

Russia's president Putin avoided discussing Iran in public, only promising that "Russia is ready to do everything in its power to contribute to a resolution of the situation in the Middle East." However, Israel had economic incentives to entice the Kremlin. Putin eagerly discussed plans to double bilateral trade volumes and suggested more collaboration "in such sensitive areas as the military-technological field, including in third-country markets." There were already some examples of such cooperation, including a 2004 project that resulted in Russia and Israel supplying the jointly designed Falcon airborne early warning system to India (The Moscow Times 19.10.2006). Since the early 2000s, Israel had another informal channel to influence Russia: it harboured several so-called oligarchs, influential opponents of Putin who fled Russia after losing to the new Russian president.

Russian-Israeli disputes on arms deliveries to Iran were part of a bigger strategic game which was not limited to the Middle East. Paying attention to Russian sensitivities leading up to the 2008 Georgia War, Israel supplied Georgia only with defensive armaments. Moreover, some time before the conflict broke out, Tel Aviv completely halted its weapons sales to Georgia. Moscow noticed this and there are good reasons to assume the existence of a deal – formal or informal – on restricting arms transfers to the respective spheres of interest of another country.

Much later, in 2012, information was published that before the 2008 Georgia war Russia and Israel exchanged access information for the advanced military equipment they had supplied to their respective adversaries. Tel Aviv supplied Moscow with the "data link code" for the UAVs Israel sold Georgia; Moscow provided Israel with the "codes" for the Tor-M1s delivered to Iran by Russia in the late 2000s (Wikileaks 2012).

Despite disturbances, the Russian-Israeli arms exports arrangement seems to have continued into the mid-2010s. There are many references to this deal, which according to

the *Al-Quds al-Arabi* daily involved some kind of agreement in exchange for restrictions by the Russian government of arms deliveries to Iran and maybe other Middle Eastern states (like Syria) by 2010. Israel committed to avoid transferring sophisticated weapons not only to Georgia but also to Ukraine, Romania and perhaps Moldova (The National 24.09.2010).

After Russian military officials confirmed deliveries of Tor-M1 SAM systems to Iran in January 2007, Israel immediately responded. Its top diplomatic and military officials expressed their extreme concern over the sale, emphasising that the deal could cause severe security consequences which would eventually “get back to Russia” (Jerusalem Post 17.01.2007).

On 18 October 2007, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert paid a surprise visit to Moscow, of less than one day, to meet Putin, who had just returned from a visit to Iran. They discussed not only the Iranian nuclear programme but also Israeli concerns about alleged “Iranian-funded arms deals” underway between Russia and Syria (USA Today 18.10.2007). Olmert said he was “very satisfied” with the results. According to insider sources, the Israeli Prime Minister came to the conclusion that Putin's government “[was] not interested in seeing Iran turn into a nuclear super-power.” On the other hand, after Olmert raised the issue of an arms deals with Syria, Putin allegedly “promised once again not to harm Israel's security interests” (Ynetnews. 19.10.2007).

On 7-8 October 2008, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert visited Moscow and met with President Medvedev to convince Russia stop selling weapons – especially S-300 systems – to Iran and Syria. He was probably able to offer the Kremlin a continuation of the arrangement restricting delivery of arms to each other’s respective spheres of influence, as well as Russian participation in Israel's talks with Syria and Palestinians. His visit is believed to have had little effect on Russian leadership (Haaretz 07.10.2008).

On 5-6 September 2010 Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak became the first ever Israeli defence minister to visit Russia (barring Yitzhak Rabin, who was simultaneously serving as prime minister). In Moscow, Barak discussed the issue of Russian arms sales to Syria and Iran with the Russian government, including the ambiguous situation surrounding the delivery of S-300 SAM systems to Iran (Jerusalem Post 05.09.2010). Barak signed the Agreement on Military Cooperation between Israel and Russia with his Russian counterpart, Anatoly Serdyukov. Russian right-wing politician and former high-level military official Leonid Ivashov commented on the Agreement saying: “This agreement even contains a clause on sharing [*obmen*] intelligence information. While earlier Russian

authorities would coordinate their deliveries of weapons to the Middle East with Israel, they are now forced to seek permission to do so [*deliver arms*].” (Ivashov 2013: 410-411)

At the first glance, opinions on Israel’s ability to influence Russian-Iranian cooperation seem to differ. Mikhail Roshchin, a Middle East researcher with the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, argued in 2006 that Israel lacked the leverage to make Russia reconsider its deals with Iran, and only the US or EU could influence the Kremlin in that regard (The Moscow Times 19.10.2006). Essentially the same view was expressed by some Israeli experts in 2008: “Olmert’s chances of dissuading Medvedev from selling arms to Iran and Syria are widely considered small” (Haaretz 07.10.2008). However, this characterisation apparently applied to the earlier years of Russian-Iranian cooperation, before the US and Israel were able to build up pressure on Iran and its partners, which they accomplished by attracting international attention to the Iranian nuclear programme and mobilising a wide array of Middle Eastern and other nations to oppose alleged Iranian ambitions. There are good reasons to believe that after this mobilisation occurred, in approximately the late 2000s, Israeli interventions, accompanied by actions of other nations, became much more effective.

According to General Leonid Ivashov, Israel had a part to play in the eventual halt of the deal on S-300 which occurred “in the interests of Israel” (Ivashov 2013: 300). This was neither the first nor last such instance. Thus, Israel also persuaded Russia not to supply Syria with Iskander tactical ballistic missiles in 2005 and S-300 SAM systems in 2014 in exchange for “help in the intelligence and secret services field [*pomoshch po linii spetssluzhb*]” which the Israeli government provided to Russia. (Kommersant Vlast' 06.06.2016)

Israel also made open efforts to influence Belarus-Iranian cooperation. Tel-Aviv had certain opportunities to do so, as since its independence Belarus maintained good relations with Israel. Israeli officials raised the issue of Belarusian cooperation with Iran during negotiations in Minsk. Thus, Israeli Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman stated: “Iran is threatening stability in the world. Militants operating in our country are trained in Iran. It is our position and, I believe, we can reach mutual understanding on this issue, as well”, which made the Iranian ambassador to Minsk respond (Naviny.by 6.4.2009).

In order to neutralise this scandal, the Belarusian foreign ministry had to assure Liberman about the “peaceful” character of Belarusian-Iranian cooperation (Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 5.6.2009). At any rate, no significant defence-related projects or even

contacts occurred between Minsk and Tel Aviv after that.

7.1.5. Pressure and Incentives from Arab Countries to Make Post-Soviet States Stop Cooperation with Iran

The Arab countries, and especially the conservative Arab regimes, were also interested in halting defence-related cooperation between Iran and the USSR/post-Soviet nations. They expressed their concerns over possible Soviet-Iranian arms deals as early as 1987. They again expressed their “extreme concern” with regard to the agreements between the Soviet Union and Iran in June 1989 (Halbach 1989a: 21), this time massive arms sales were involved; their scale was unclear at the time.

However, Arab countries had little leverage over the Soviet Union. This was due not only to decades of disrupted links between Soviet Muslims and the Islamic world, but also because some of them did not even have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The major Arab opponent of Iran, Saudi Arabia, only established relations with the Soviet Union in 1990.

Russian defence industries always had their eye on the promising markets and partners in conservative Arab countries, although perhaps by the late 1990s they realised that they had few chances of accessing them. Moreover, there was an understanding that sales to conservative Middle Eastern regimes, especially the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, are related to Iran's military rise and Iranian-Russian cooperation. In 1993, the Chairman of Russia's State Committee for Defence Industries, Viktor Glukhikh, in a comment on the prospects of Russian military exports and partnerships, admitted that he was “also looking to the Middle East, with special emphasis on Persian Gulf states like the United Arab Emirates, which are watching Iraq and Iran with unabated fear” (New York Times 03.02.1993).

However, Moscow had to make the most difficult choice between Iran and its adversaries in the Arab world much later, in the late 2000s. The decision had to do with the growing concerns of Arab countries concerning the Iranian nuclear programme and the implications of Russian sales of air defence systems to Tehran. They were concerned over Iran's ability to pursue a nuclear programme without fear of it being taken out in an air attack.

Commenting on President Medvedev's decision to cancel the S-300 deal with Tehran, the Emirati daily *The National* wrote: “It is also possible that Arab countries intervened and made alluring economic offers to Russia in exchange for breaking its deal with Iran.” (The National 24.09.2010)

These offers could have been in various spheres, and there are several known cases of such proposals concerning defence, political and economic issues. Some of them were explicit and publicly announced while others can be implied. Thus, Saudi Arabia, which had never before bought any defence-related equipment from Russia, started negotiating for the newest Russian hardware in 2005. The hardware included T-90S tanks, BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicles, Mi-35 and Mi-17 helicopters, and Pantsir, Buk-M2E and S-400 surface-to-air missile systems (Lenta.ru 01.10.2009).

On 14 February 2008, Saudi Prime Minister Saud Al Faisal visited Moscow to meet Russia's President Putin. He brought a message from the Saudi king and tried to persuade Moscow to give up its cooperation with Iran, particularly in the nuclear and military-technical fields, referring to Tehran's allegedly destabilising role in the Middle East. The Kremlin was also asked to stop supporting Iran in the UN and other international organisations. In exchange for Russia's renouncing cooperation with Iran, the Saudi government offered to buy Russian arms, vastly increase bilateral economic cooperation and support Russia's accession to the WTO.

As *Kommersant*, a Moscow-based daily, commented: "Riyadh offered to take Tehran's place as a Russian partner in the military technical sphere." Saudi Arabia hinted at possible purchases of infantry fighting vehicles and tanks for \$800m by the end of 2008; it also launched preliminary talks on purchasing various military helicopters for about \$1.6bn and declared its willingness to buy the whole array of Russian-made anti-aircraft arms (Gritskova & Reutov 2008).

In September 2009, information about forthcoming large-scale sales of Russian weapons to Saudi Arabia contingent on Russia cancelling its S-300 contract with Iran again appeared in the Russian and Western media. The *Financial Times* reported that Riyadh was willing to buy arms for more than \$2bn at once and buy additional weapons in the future for another \$5bn, including S-400. The Russian business daily *Vedomosti* reported that the first contracts could be concluded by the end of 2009 (Lenta.ru 01.10.2009). However, none of these deals ever materialised.

Arab countries also made Moscow offers to change its policies in exchange for strategic cooperation, investments and/or economic deals which had no direct relations to military equipment. Among known cases is an offer by Saudi Arabia made during the civil war in Syria in order to get Moscow drop its support for the Bashar Asad-led Syrian government. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir revealed the offer in July 2016, summarising it thus: "We are ready to give Russia a stake in the Middle East that will make Russia a force

stronger than the Soviet Union.” In particular, the Saudi government offered to help Russia “access the Gulf Cooperation Council market and a pool of investment that exceeds that of China” (Politico 22.07.2016).

Arab countries made similar attempts with regard to Ukrainian and Belarusian relations with Iran. According to official information, in the mid-2010s the total sum of arms contracts signed between Ukraine and Saudi Arabia came to \$300-500m, which was comparable with Ukraine's total sum of defence exports in 2015. Although not all contracts were published, one of them involved design and manufacture of the Antonov firm's An-132, with Saudi investments promised to reach \$40m (RIA Novosti Ukraina 21.07.2016). Less reliable information exists about another project involving the design of the Grom tactical ballistic missile system at the Pavlohrad Chemical Factory (Segodnya 23.08.2016).

Both of these firms are known to have implemented several major deals with Iran in the past. Furthermore, the Antonov firm had been formally implementing a joint project with Iran since 1996 on manufacturing An-140 aircraft, although in reality the project had stopped by the mid-2010s. The Pavlohrad Chemical Factory is known to have supplied Iran with military-use special equipment, most probably for its missile programme, in the 1990s.

It would be logical to relate the concerns of Iran's adversaries regarding the worsening situation of the Ukrainian defence industries – which might push Ukrainian firms towards Iran – with Saudi Arabia's and other Arab and non-Arab countries' efforts to prevent Ukrainian-Iranian defence cooperation. Moreover, these efforts may have proved effective, as the Ukrainian-Iranian aircraft project did indeed stop following more intensive efforts from Iran's adversaries to court Ukrainian defence industries.

The Russian media discussed the probability that Saudi Arabia's signing the “Partnership Agreement on Design and Production of Light Transport Aircraft An-132” with Ukraine's GP Antonov firm in April 2015 in Saudi Arabia was the main factor which caused Ukraine to halt delivery of parts for production of the An-140 in Iran. The result was a halt on production of An-140 in that country.

The agreement was concluded between the Antonov firm and an affiliate of the Saudi Taqnia Aeronautics with participation of Canadian Pratt & Whitney Canada and the American corporation GE Aviation. It stipulated the transfer of aircraft production, training of Saudi specialists and re-design of An-32 transport aircraft. On 16 June 2015 a five-party agreement on design and construction of an aircraft factory was signed in Paris. Among the signatory parties were Saudi Taqnia, Ukraine's Antonov, UkrNII AT and Altis Holding, as

well as the German company Broetje-Automation. *RIA Novosti Ukraina* underlined that Saudi Arabia possessed a large fleet of aircraft of various types, had never bought any arms from post-Soviet nations and had never designed nor developed any sophisticated weapons; these three details also point to a political basis to the agreement, as well as its probable relation to stopping Ukraine's cooperation in aircraft manufacture with Iran (*RIA Novosti Ukraina* 01.07.2015).

In the case of Belarus, Qatar was the conservative Arab regime that probably worked the hardest to lure Minsk away from Tehran, although it was not alone in the endeavour in the region; it could also have coordinated its activities with the US and Israel. Starting in the late 2000s, Belarus secured several minor contracts with Arab monarchies in the Persian Gulf, notably Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, all of which were supportive of Western pressure and even military action against Iran beginning in the late 2000s. These Arab nations and Belarus exchanged a series of visits starting in 2009.

These contacts culminated in a visit by president Lukashenka to Qatar in 2011, which coincided with Belarus's dropping of contacts with Qaddafi's Libya and minimising contacts with Syria and Iran (resulting in the halt of a major oil project in Iran). Arab monarchies and the Belarusian government discussed wide-scale projects in this period, and Lukashenka publicly boasted of Minsk's plans for cooperation (such as a Qatari-supported "Arab Island in Europe" investment project). However, very few of these plans ever materialised.

7.2. US Sanctions Imposed for Cooperation with Iran

There are 47 cases of sanctions imposed by the US Government against Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian entities and persons which can be attributed to transfer of military equipment and technologies (excluding ABC weapons in a strict sense). The US tends to introduce sanctions without specifying the evidence on which its actions are based and even which specific action triggered the imposition of sanctions.

Analysing the legal reference, political context, known deals of sanctioned entities, and information leaked to the media from government agencies allows the media and analysts to put forth interpretations of specific sanctions. Even the official legal reference provides few clues, as many non-proliferation laws deal with several countries at once (Iran, North Korea, Iraq, Libya, etc.)

In this study, sanctions are considered to be a tool used to put pressure on another country to modify its policies in accordance with the wishes of the party imposing sanctions. US

sanctions – actual or probable – became a major factor in defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations.

Almost all 47 cases of US sanctions on Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian entities for transfer of non-WMD military equipment and technologies can be attributed to cooperation with Iran. The complete list of US sanctions is provided in Appendix 9.

The most debatable cases are three sets of sanctions against Russia's Volsk Mechanical Plant, Tula Instrument Design Bureau (KB Priborostroyeniya) and TSNIITochmash, imposed on 29 March 1999, which the media usually attributes to their delivery of Kornet-E and Metis-M anti-tank missile systems to Syria. However, the same entities were involved in cooperation with Iran, and the official legal basis for sanctioning these firms does not provide a clear indication that they were targeted specifically for their collaboration with Syria.

There are also other cases in which the country of collaboration triggering sanctions remains uncertain. However, almost all of these involve uncertainty only between Iran and Syria. Drawing final conclusions is impossible not only because of the scarcity of information, but also because of the close cooperation between Iran and Syria themselves, which has included transfer of military equipment between them.

For the purposes of this study, the probable logic of US decision-makers provides a basis to compile a list of US sanctions targeting defence-related cooperation between Iran and the three post-Soviet nations under consideration. In other words the study focuses on the sanctions aimed to curb military equipment and technology transfers to Iran and its closest ally in 1980s-2015, Syria. Thus, it may not be so important to identify which specific instance of defence-related cooperation involving post-Soviet nations and the two allied Middle Eastern states triggered the sanctions. The sanctions were imposed to make the general limits for this cooperation clear according to American desires.

This logic is also true when it comes to uncertainty about what kind of equipment, knowledge and technologies were transferred that triggered sanctions. Many pieces of equipment, services, types of knowledge, and technologies were of a dual-use nature and are subject to numerous interpretations as to whether military use was intended (such as the steel Iran tried to obtain in 1998). Again, for the purposes of this study, it is presumed that US sanctions were aimed at halting any kind of defence-related cooperation with Iran that could even potentially facilitate the development of Iran's conventional military might. This objective was at least one of the major reasons for imposing sanctions.

Although several cases can be argued to involve transfer of WMD equipment, technologies or expertise, their number is very limited, and all of these cases were exclusively of a nuclear nature. Unfortunately, these cannot be identified with certainty as the US government has not elaborated on its decisions. What's more, publicly available information on sanctioned entities is often not sufficient to draw conclusions on whether a given entity was working on WMD or whether its particular projects with Iran involved transfer of WMD-relevant equipment, technologies or expertise.

Therefore, due to these circumstances and the small number of cases which most likely involved such transfers, this study deals with all cases of sanctions without discriminating on the basis of relevance to WMD. This does not contradict the core of this study, as all US sanctions expressed the general attitude of the US government towards Russian collaboration with Iran on defence-related issues, conventional or otherwise.

As follows from Table 16 below, most sanctions were imposed on Russian entities. Some of them were sanctioned repeatedly and sometimes even simultaneously under various legal acts. For instance, in 1999-2015, the Tula Design Bureau of Instrument Building was sanctioned six times; the Belarusian Belvneshpromservis was sanctioned four times between 2004-2014.

Table 16. Nationality of post-Soviet entities and persons sanctioned in 1998-2015 because of their suspected involvement in defence-related cooperation with Iran (on conventional weapons).

Country	Number of sanctions
Belarus	9
Russia	37
Ukraine	1
Total	47

Note. Calculated and compiled by the author.

Washington signalled its willingness to resort to sanctions when in March 1998 the US State Department circulated among US government programmes' managers a list of 20 Russian companies and entities believed to be connected with Iran's missile programmes that henceforth were obliged to request special permission from the State Department to proceed with non-proliferation projects which they implement jointly with US entities¹⁶. The list was initially circulated covertly, but on 16 April 1998 a State Department

¹⁶ It specifically targeted the two major mechanisms for conversion of Soviet military industries: the Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention, implemented by the US Energy Department; and the International Science and Technology Centers (active in Russia and Ukraine), implemented by the US State Department. Both of them supported non-military cooperative projects to employ former Soviet arms experts.

spokesman publicly confirmed its existence. Moreover, by that time several projects with the Baltic State Technical University in St. Petersburg, the Moscow-based TsAGI (Central Aerodynamic Institute) and the Moscow Aviation Institute were cancelled on these grounds. Meanwhile, State Department officials conceded that the list contained: “some entities about which there is a suspicion but no particular proof” (Science 21.04.1998). The first full-scale sanctions against Russian entities for defence-related cooperation with Iran were imposed in July 1998.

The direct impact of sanctions over sanctioned entities did not bear such serious long-term consequences as the US might have hoped. For instance, after being sanctioned in 1999, the Moscow Aviation Institute lost two contracts with US firms worth a total of ca. \$500,000, but earned ca. \$180,000 yearly through its training of Iranian specialists and implemented another joint project with Iran valued at ca. \$100,000 (Dmitriev 1999).

In the long run, entities sanctioned under US laws effectively lost direct access to American cutting-edge technologies; US government agencies and organisations were completely prohibited from dealing with blacklisted entities. Sanctioned entities were not allowed to buy any military equipment or components in the US, nor could they procure defence-related services (Makedonov 2010).

Thus, sanctions imposed in 2006 by the State Department against the Russian firms Rosoboroneksport and Sukhoi because of their deals with Iran complicated their sales of essentially civilian Russia-made equipment containing US-made components. This particularly affected the production prospects of one of the most ambitious projects of the Russian aircraft industry, the SSJ100 regional jet, as in the late 2000s the US State Department refused to grant two American suppliers (including Hamilton Sundstrand) permission to delivery components for the SSJ100.

Likewise, reportedly in 2009, under pressure from the US Government, Canada's Pratt & Whitney Canada refused to supply its engines for the Russian-made Ansat (PW-207K) and Mi-38 (PW-127) helicopters (AO ODK 27.04.2010). Sanctions were imposed on the basis of the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Non-proliferation Act (2000), the Iran Non-Proliferation Act (2000) and executive orders from the US President. The president has legal authority to issue such executive orders based on two missile sanctions laws: the Arms Export Control Act and the Export Administration Act, which prohibit the transfer of missile equipment or technology by foreign persons.

Several waves of sanctions (and their removal) can be identified, as shown in Tables 17 and 18. To calculate the duration of sanctions in all tables of this chapter, the following rule

is applied: if during one calendar year a sanction was effective for three months or more than it is considered to be effective in this specific year.

Table 17. US Sanctions imposed against Russian Entities and Persons.

Year	Number of Sanctions Imposed	Number of Sanctions Expired or Lifted	Number of Sanctions Active
1998	7	0	7
1999	5	0	12
2000	0	2	12
2001	0	0	10
2002	3	0	13
2003	1	3	14
2004	5	8	15
2005	0	0	9
2006	6	5	11
2007	0	0	10
2008	1	5	10
2009	0	0	6
2010	0	5	4
2011	0	0	1
2012	0	0	1
2013	0	0	1
2014	4	0	1
2015	5	0	10

Note. Calculated and compiled by the author.

Table 18. US Sanctions imposed against Belarusian Entities and Persons

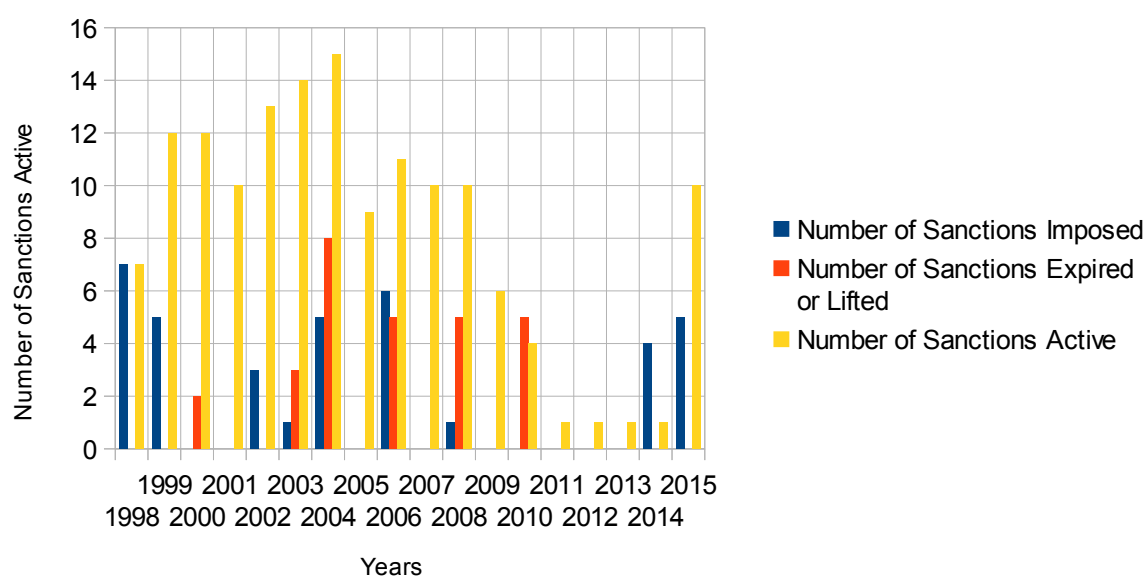
Year	Number of Sanctions Imposed	Number of Sanctions Expired or Lifted	Number of Sanctions Active
2004	2	0	2
2005	0	0	2
2006	0	2	2
2007	0	0	0
2008	0	0	0
2009	0	0	0
2010	1	0	1
2011	3	0	3
2012	0	1	4
2013	2	3	5
2014	1	0	2
2015	0	2	1

Note. Calculated and compiled by the author.

The difference in US sanctions policies against entities and persons of the three post-Soviet countries can be seen from Figure 3.

Figure 3. US Sanctions Imposed against Entities and Persons of Russia, Ukraine and

Belarus because of suspected cooperating with Iran



Note. Calculated and drawn by the author.

After Russia changed its position on Iran, and even before the deal on the S-300 was formally cancelled, in May 2010 Washington removed sanctions against four Russian entities suspected of dealing with Iran or Syria, including the major Russian arms trading firm Rosoboroneksport. The US Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Philip J. Crowley, announced that the US Government did this because Moscow “[had] recently modified its approach to Iran” and now demonstrated moderation in arms deals with Tehran. The US believed that Russia “share[d]” its concerns regarding Iran and would support the restrictions on arms trade contained in the draft of the UN Security Council resolution. At the same time, the US State Department denied that Washington had made a deal with Moscow in which it would cancel the sanctions in exchange for Russia’s support for a new package of measures against Iran.

The Russian government was concerned about US sanctions against Russian companies, and in March 2010, at a meeting between US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Russia’s President Vladimir Putin the latter raised the issue. According to him, Moscow wished to resolve the problem, as Boeing and US oil companies were permitted to work in Russia. He implied that such sanctions were unfair as Russian entities were not able to operate in the US (Makedonov 2010).

7.3. Covert Actions of Third Parties Opposing Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Countries

Possible cases of sabotage against defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU

nations remained largely untouched in the media. The first major possible case of this phenomenon occurred in the early 2000s. On 23 December 2002, an aircraft carrying numerous top managers and leading design specialists of the Ukrainian and Russian aircraft industries crashed near Isfahan.

Among the 44 victims were persons involved in cooperation with Iran on establishing aircraft production; they worked for Ukraine's Kharkiv State Aviation Production Association (KhGAPP), Antonov ANTK, NPO Yuzhmash, Elektronpribor, FED and the Russian firms Rubin, Avionika, Agregat, Aerosila, Interamin and Rubin. "These were the best specialists of the aviation industry in Ukraine and Russia... The aircraft-building industry of Ukraine is now effectively beheaded," commented former director of KhGAPP, Ukrainian Minister of Industrial Policy Anatolii Myalitsa (Transpress 2003).

The conservative-minded Iranian daily *Jaam-e Jam* argued on 24 December 2002 that given the specific passengers onboard the aircraft, one: "cannot rule out probable diversion." In other words, the plane possibly crashed because of a "Zionist" conspiracy. It pointed out that the aircraft had refuelled in Turkey where "Mossad agents" acted (Newsru.com 25.12.2002). *Jaam-e Jam*, published by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), a state media corporation, has access to inside information and reflects the views of at least some segment of the Iranian establishment.

While the Iranian media expressed the possibility of covert Israeli action in harshly ideologically-coloured terms, the theory is not completely baseless. Many Ukrainian media sources also emphasised that the plane had refuelled in the Turkish city of Trabzon, although it apparently had sufficient fuel to fly directly from Kharkiv in Ukraine to Isfahan in Iran. Indeed, in those years Israel had close cooperative links with Turkey, and Israeli security agencies had some freedom of action in the country, especially before Erdogan's AKP Party came to power.

In a similar case, on 21 June 2003, the first deputy director and chief constructor of the Ukrainian ZMKB, Prohres firm Oleh Muravchenko, drowned in the Sea of Azov. Not only was he involved in designing engines for a series of Antonov and Tupolev aircraft, including the An-140 and An-70, he also participated in implementing Ukrainian-Iranian projects. In addition, Oleh was the son of Fedir Muravchenko, the general director of ZMKB Prohres in 1989-2010. ZMKB Prohres was the leading aircraft, helicopter and industrial-use engine-designing organisation in the Soviet Union, which in independent Ukraine after 1991 became part of the State Concern Ukroboronprom.

A third conspicuous case occurred in June 2011, when an aircraft catastrophe near

Petrozavodsk in Russia led to the death of five leading experts and managers of three firms belonging to Russia's national nuclear corporation, Rosatom. At that time, the companies were acting as the major contractors for Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant. Commenting on the accident soon after its occurrence, *Haaretz*, the oldest daily newspaper in Israel (and known for its left-liberal positions), published a very ambiguous text hinting at the probable involvement of Israel's secret service. "According to the sources, although Iranian nuclear scientists have in the past been involved in unexplained accidents and plane crashes, there is no official suspicion of foul play [in the Petrozavodsk accident]." (*Haaretz* 23.06.2011)

The most remarkable detail here is that it was *Haaretz* which chose to raise the issue of possible Israeli involvement, while the Russian media voiced the same suspicions only later. Tel Aviv – as usual – never claimed responsibility for the assassination of Iranian experts involved in the country's nuclear programme, despite the fact that this version is supported by an absolute majority of experts.

Contemporary practice in international politics proves that covert action involving lethal force aimed at disrupting undesirable activity is far from extraordinary. For example, the CIA took covert action to disrupt the nuclear proliferation network developed by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan by "sabotaging production or manufacturing at one of the plants associated with the Khan network" or interfering with transport, "perhaps by debilitating or even sinking a vessel" (Corera 2006: 172). Israeli's Mossad also applied such measure to stop Egypt's missile programme in the 1960s and Iraq's nuclear programme in the 1980s, not shying away from assassinations.

Another kind of covert action involves interdiction of deliveries. Thus, in August 2003, Latvian authorities stopped a military cargo on its way from Russia to Iran via the Riga airport. Latvia initially announced that the cargo had been halted by its customs officials on 21 August, after they had noticed irregularities in consignment documents. However, it was later revealed that the cargo was investigated and confiscated two days earlier, in the night of 18-19 August, after Riga was tipped off about the Iran-bound cargo by the US. The officials present at the opening of the cargo told the media that the operation in Riga airport had been ordered by an English-speaking man who was ostensibly "a representative of the American side." In May 2004, the Latvian Security Police officially conceded that US officials were helping investigate the case (*Telegraf* 14.05.2004).

Less certainty exists around another case of covert action, which involved the possible interdiction of a merchant vessel called Arctic Sea. In July-August 2009, the ship went

missing in the Baltic Sea and was subsequently found off the West African coast. Media and experts widely discussed the possible use of the vessel for transport of weapons to Iran (S-300 SAM systems are most frequently mentioned as a probable cargo) and Israeli (and/or Western) covert action to raid (and maybe even hijack) the vessel to reveal the secret arms transfer (The Guardian 24.09.2009). Speculations about Israeli involvement are backed up by the brief secret visit of Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel to Moscow in early September 2009, as the events surrounding the Arctic Sea were still unfolding.

At the very least, these accidents and deaths could have been exploited to hint that cooperation with Iran is dangerous business.

7.4. Conclusions

The hypothesis tested has been partially confirmed. Third parties – both states and international organisations – strived to establish the limits of defence-related cooperation between post-Soviet nations and Iran. The number of third parties involved and the degree of their insistence on halting defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations varied, but third parties were never completely out of the process of defence-related interaction between Iran and former Soviet nations. A summary of the actions of third parties and the dynamics of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations is briefly presented in tables 19, 20 and 21 below:

Table 19. Actions of Third Parties Targeting Non-WMD Weapons, Technologies and Expertise Transfers from (F)SU Nations to Iran and Soviet and Russian relations with Iran.

Year	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation (Transfers, \$, Million)	US Sanctions Effective that Year	Other Relevant Actions by Third Parties with Regard to Defence-Related Cooperation with Iran
1989	370	None	None
1990			
1991			
1992	500	None	Political Pressure by the US
1993			
1994			
1995			
1996			
1997			
1998	300	7	

1999		12	
2000	250	12	
2001		10	
2002		13	
2003		14	
2004		15	
2005		9	
2006		11	
2007		10	
2008	150	10	
2009		6	Incident concerning the vessel Arctic Sea (July-August); the US reviews its plans for the Europe-based missile-defence system making them more acceptable to Russia (September)
2010		4	
2011	<100	1	
2012		1	
2013		1	
2014	300	1	
2015		10	

Note. Calculated and compiled by the author.

Table 20. The Actions of Third Parties Targeting Non-WMD Weapons, Technologies and Expertise Transfers from (F)SU Nations to Iran and Ukrainian-Iranian Defence-Related Cooperation.

Year	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation (Transfers, \$, Million)	US Sanctions Effective that Year	Other Relevant Actions by Third Parties with Regard to Defence-Related Cooperation with Iran
1992	40	None	
1993			
1994			
1995			
1996			
1997			
1998			
1999			
2000			
2001			
2002	30	None	Death of a large group of top managers and

			designers of the Antonov firm
2003			Death of the chief designer of ZMKB Prohres
2004		1	
2005		1	
2006		1	
2007		None	
2008			
2009			
2010	<10	None	
2011			
2012			
2013			
2014			
2015	0	None	Beginning of defence-related cooperation with Saudi Arabia (aircraft and possibly missiles)

Note. Calculated and compiled by the author.

Table 21. Actions of Third Parties Targeting Non-WMD Weapons, Technologies and Expertise Transfers from (F)SU Nations to Iran and Belarusian-Iranian Defence-Related Cooperation.

Year	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation (Transfers, \$, Million)	US Sanctions Effective that Year	Other Relevant Actions by Third Parties with Regard to Defence-Related Cooperation with Iran
1992	0	None	
1993			
1994			
1995	<5	None	
1996			
1997			
1998			
1999			
2000	10	None	
2001			
2002			
2003		2	
2004			
2005		2	

2006		2	
2007		0	
2008		0	
2009		0	
2010	<5	1	Rapprochement with conservative Arab regimes beginning in the 2010s
2011		3	
2012		4	
2013		5	
2014		2	
2015		1	

Note. Calculated and compiled by the author.

The efficacy of unilateral actions undertaken by various third parties to influence defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations increased as Iran's partners became more integrated in Western-dominated international structures and regimes – as illustrated in the preceding Chapter. For instance, before the second half of the 1990s, the West had difficulty convincing Moscow or Kyiv to restrict their defence-related cooperation with Iran. Due to its difficult relationship with the West, Belarus remained relatively safe from such influence throughout the whole period under consideration.

Unilateral actions by third parties may have proven efficient in limiting specific projects or fields of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. A probable case in point is the increasingly limited cooperation between Iran and the Ukrainian Antonov firm, which correlates with lethal accidents among its top managers and designers from a related engine-designing and -manufacturing firm.

That said, unilateral actions of third parties aimed at halting or significantly reducing defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations generally failed to achieve that aim. For instance, Russia continued to cooperate with Iran in the field in the 2000s despite facing the highest ever number of US sanctions and constant pressure from Israel.

What's more, Russia was constantly being offered numerous economic, political and strategic incentives by the US, Israel and some Arab countries. Only after pressure on Iran gained a multilateral character, also through UN mechanisms, did Moscow finally put a stop to its defence-related cooperation with Iran (*more on that – in the next Chapter*).

8. Iran's Nuclear Programme and Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Nations

Mounting Western and international concern over Iran's nuclear ambitions was a major determining factor for Iran's international position. Two former Soviet nations – Russia and Ukraine – were directly involved in Tehran's nuclear endeavour, and neither of them most of the time tended to view Tehran's activities in the nuclear sphere as threatening.

However, these activities were perceived by many Western and regional analysts and politicians as undermining one of the fundamental principles of the existing international system, and hence provoked serious concern among Iran's opponents in both the region and beyond. Starting in the mid-2000s, an increasing number of states explicitly or implicitly opposed or criticised Tehran's policies in the nuclear field. US President Barack Obama described the mobilisation of global powers to rein in Iranian nuclear ambitions thus:

“...we were prepared to resolve this issue diplomatically, but only if Iran came to the table in a serious way. When that did not happen, we rallied the world to impose the toughest sanctions in history -- sanctions which had a profound impact on the Iranian economy. Now, sanctions alone could not stop Iran's nuclear program. But they did help bring Iran to the negotiating table. Because of our diplomatic efforts, the world stood with us and we were joined at the negotiating table by the world's major powers -- the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China, as well as the European Union” (The White House 02.04.2015).

Indeed, by the late 2000s opposition to Iran's nuclear efforts had become global in scale and can be defined as a systemic answer to attempts to undermine the international system.

The Iranian leadership openly discussed which new potential capacities their country would gain if it succeeded in its nuclear efforts. For instance, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared in 2010 that “Iran is powerful enough to change global equations”, implying that the Iranian nuclear programme was part of its power (FARS 01.12.2010).

Opponents of the Iranian government saw the situation in a similar way. US President Obama pointed out that Iranian nuclear weapons could not only be transferred to terrorist organisations, but also compel other nations in the region to develop their own nuclear capacities and make the Iranian government and its allies more unscrupulous (The White House 04.03.2012).

This view was shared in at least some parts of the Russian establishment. A leading Russian expert on arms issues and the West, Aleksei Arbatov, who was known to have been affiliated with the Russian government for decades, pointed out that the problem created by Tehran had two aspects. The first was the crisis of non-proliferation, while the other was the risk of Iran becoming a global centre of power, seeing as it had already become a regional hegemon. Thus:

“The aim that Iran is pursuing at minimum is to consolidate itself as the regional hegemon, and in the nearest future (through negotiations with major powers and haggling over concessions) become the leader of the entire Islamic world, thus effectively becoming a global centre of power. The nuclear component of Iran's status as a global centre of power may consist of either acquiring weapons or coming as close as possible to acquiring weapons without crossing the line” (Segodnya 17.02.2006).

By becoming so important, the Iranian nuclear programme should have been a major factor affecting all kinds of interactions with Iran, including defence-related cooperation with post-Soviet countries. This would have made such interaction more dangerous for the latter in two regards. First, a nuclear-armed Iran could pose a greater threat to them and their interests directly (as was the case for states located closer to Iran, like Russia). Second, continuing cooperation with Iran could have brought a greater risk of retaliatory action from reactions of third parties (for Russia, Ukraine and Belarus).

The (F)SU nations were not willing to pay the price for Iran's steadfast opposition to the fundamental standards of the international system, and were even less willing to side with Iran in that dispute. Despite all complications in their relations with the West, the three nations never challenged the fundamentals of the existing international order, not even Belarus.

Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev characterised his vision of his country's task regarding the international crisis over the Iranian nuclear programme thus: “together with the United States and other countries we shall continue to create positive incentives for Iran to pursue peaceful research in the field of nuclear energy ... to make all its programmes open” (MID RF 25.09.2009: 6).

This Chapter considers cooperation between post-Soviet states and Iran in the nuclear sphere and how this interaction diminished as the international crisis over Tehran's nuclear programme grew. After that, it analyses how the post-Soviet states joined the efforts of global powers and later almost the entire international community to contain Iran and what effect this had on their cooperation with Iran in nuclear and other fields. An important goal

of this chapter will be to clarify what made the post-Soviet countries support international efforts aimed at halting and limiting Iran's nuclear programme; it will explore whether their motivation lay primarily in their own concern about Iran threatening their interests and security, the pressure of third parties, or conformity with global powers and the international community.

8.1. Iranian Nuclear Efforts and Nuclear Cooperation with (F)SU Nations

The Iranian nuclear programme started under the Shah in the 1970s. Officially peaceful, it focused on research, medicine and agriculture; it also initiated the construction of the first in a series of planned nuclear power plants (NPP), in Bushehr.

Nevertheless, experts started to discuss the probable development of nuclear weapons by Iran as early as the mid-1970s (e.g., Hessing Cahn 1975). In the early 2010s, a top official in the Iranian government at the time admitted that during the war with Iraq in 1980s, Tehran had studied opportunities to acquire nuclear weapons: “We had undertaken studies in this field. But I immediately made a speech in the IRGC and said that we should manufacture everything ... but the atomic bomb, because the imam said we should not make it” (Elamiyan 1392: 368).

Reportedly, Khomeini stopped such attempts twice: in 1984 and 1988; his opinion – not fixed in written form at that point – is considered a binding fatwa to his followers. Later on, the next Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, issued a more formal fatwa which was also published in 2004, yet “commentators and news media in the United States and Europe have regarded it as a propaganda ploy not to be taken seriously” (Porter 2014).

In the 1980s Iran's nuclear programme came almost to a halt and received a fresh chance only at the very end of the decade. Later, constitutional amendments and a change of leadership signalled the start of a so-called “Epoch of Reconstruction” proclaimed by President Hashemi Rafsanjani. The nuclear effort was part of the economic reconstruction and development efforts of his government.

Although Tehran hoped to restore the earlier partnerships in this sphere which it had enjoyed with Western firms, especially West German ones, it also had contacts with other countries which could offer nuclear technology and equipment. In 1990, a delegation of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI) came to the Soviet Union, also visiting the Rivne nuclear power plant in Ukraine (Mahdiyan 2014: 121).

On 25 August 1992, an agreement was signed between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation on cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear

energy along with an agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on cooperation in the construction of nuclear power plants in Iran.

Russian experts also helped survey Iranian uranium deposits and drafted a project for the construction of a uranium ore reprocessing plant (Novaya gazeta 09.03.2006).

In January 1995, Iran signed a contract with Russia's Ministry of Atomic Energy to complete the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant, formerly built by German firms. According to the Russian-Iranian agreement, Moscow would provide Iran with the VVER-1000, a pressurised light-water reactor (915 MWe), and complete the project by 2009. This provoked an immediate response from the US, which openly objected to the arrangement during US President Clinton's visit to Moscow in May 1995. He convinced Russian president Boris Yeltsin to promise to end transfer of nuclear technologies to Iran, although the two sides apparently interpreted the promise differently.

The US was also able to persuade Russia to cooperate on halting several other nuclear projects with Iran. Thus, in January 1995, at the same time as it signed the Bushehr contract, Russia's Minister for Nuclear Energy Viktor Mikhailov and the Vice-President of Iran and President of the Nuclear Energy Organisation Reza Amrollahi agreed to launch talks on the construction in Iran of a centrifuge facility to enrich uranium. Such a plant would provide Iran with a crucial capacity needed to produce nuclear weapons. However, the document was leaked and led to protests from America, and Moscow subsequently cancelled such plans and called the whole affair a misunderstanding (Novaya gazeta 09.03.2006).

Meanwhile, in 1992-1998, the top managers of NIKIET, a major research and design institute affiliated with the State Atomic Energy Corporation ROSATOM, conducted talks with Tehran on the sale of a pressurised heavy water reactor and a nuclear research centre (Parker 2009: 140-141). The reactor could have been used to acquire plutonium for nuclear weapons. NIKIET even signed a contract stipulating possible supplies of heavy water and graphite to Iran. The deal was stopped by Russian authorities after the US government learned of the negotiations and protested to the Kremlin (Novaya gazeta 26.04.1999).

Although Russian officials at the time insisted that NIKIET was acting on its own without authorisation, details related to the affair and later statements of former officials (see Novaya gazeta 09.03.2006) indicate that the Iran deal was known at least to the corresponding ministry. In other words, although Russia continued to implement the part of its nuclear cooperation programme with Iran that it found most profitable, it was willing to

cooperate with third parties on cancelling numerous other components of the programme when they aroused too much anger from third parties.

Thus, while renouncing the above-mentioned nuclear projects with Tehran, in 1998 Moscow signed another, more specific contract on construction of the Bushehr NPP. Concurrently, it fought back harshly against Israeli attempts to convince the Russian government to stop nuclear cooperation with Iran and even retaliated by calling for inspection of Israel's probable nuclear capacities (Kommersant 07.03.1998).

Nuclear cooperation continued to play a key role in Russian-Iranian relations in the 2000s, and implementation of the agreement on the Bushehr NPP constituted a major part of Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation. Another major point of collaboration in that sphere consisted of political support for Iran's nuclear programme. This support was crucial for Tehran, despite the fact that Moscow provided it in a rather unstable way.

Both aspects of nuclear cooperation remained closely connected, although they involved very different activities of Iranian nuclear energy organisations. Russia insisted on separating the two issues when it addressed the international community. The Kremlin's position on the issue, inter alia, led to Resolution 1747 being adopted only after four months of negotiations, on 24 March 2007, and only after the initial draft of the resolution, which would have imposed curbs on the Bushehr project, had been dropped.

The New York Times noted that the Russian government was doing whatever it could to separate the Bushehr project from the Iranian nuclear crisis. Thus, the Secretary of Russia's Security Council, Sergei Ivanov, insisted: "It is a separate issue [*the Bushehr project and the crisis surrounding the Iranian nuclear programme*]. All the work being done [*in Bushehr*] is under strict control of the IAEA" (New York Times 20.03.2007).

Although Moscow frequently defended Tehran when the latter faced Western criticism and sanctions, its involvement in Iran's nuclear programme outside its Bushehr component was limited, especially after the mid-2000s. Thus, Russia was apparently unaware of major facilities secretly constructed by Tehran, such as the Fordow uranium enrichment plant (Patrikarakos 2013: 254).

8.1.1. Interaction over Nuclear Issues in 2002-2005: Beginning of the Crisis over Iran's Nuclear Programme

Before 2002, it was mostly the US and Israel that regularly raised the issue of Iran's nuclear programme in international institutions and the global media. These efforts

remained more or less free of serious repercussions for Iran and its nuclear efforts. This situation began to change and rapidly evolved into a crisis after 14 August 2002, when detailed information about Iranian secret uranium enrichment facilities was published by an armed Iranian armed opposition group called Mojaheddin-e Khalgh (MKO) (Parker 2009: 216-217). There were widespread suspicions that in actual fact foreign security services were using the MKO to release information they had gathered.

Even before the August 2002 revelations, Moscow hinted at its willingness to compromise with the West with regard to its nuclear cooperation with Iran. On 27 March 2002, Russian Minister of Nuclear Energy Alexander Rumyantsev announced that Russia would supply Iran with nuclear fuel only under the condition of its return. After the Iranian nuclear facilities revelations, on 24 October 2002 the chief of the Information Policy Department of the Ministry of Nuclear Energy of the Russian Federation, Nikolai Shingaryov, dismissed rumours that the US had offered Russia \$10bn if it halted its nuclear cooperation with Iran. However, Shingaryov stressed that Russia would be willing to enter into negotiations if the proposal were made at the official level.

Then, on 15 May 2003, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov urged Iran to sign the IAEA Additional Safeguards Protocol, and Nuclear Energy Minister Rumyantsev went as far as to propose that Russia and the US cooperate on the construction of the Bushehr NPP.

On 3 June 2003, Russian President Putin stated that Russia was going to continue cooperating with Iran on peaceful nuclear energy use under IAEA control. The next day, his advisor Andrei Illarionov elaborated, saying that cooperation with Iran in the nuclear sphere would depend on Tehran's openness towards IAEA inspections.

Soon after, the IAEA officially stated that Iran had failed to declare its sensitive enrichment and reprocessing activities, which led to the adoption of a resolution by the IAEA Board on 12 September 2003. The resolution stated the facts established by the IAEA, demanded suspension of further uranium-enrichment activities, and warned Tehran of referral to the UN Security Council. Iran reportedly took the September resolution very seriously: “as far as the Iranians were concerned, the September 2003 resolution threatened national security and turned the situation into a crisis” (Patrikarakos 2013: 188).

To find a solution to the emerging international crisis, in 2003 France, Germany and the UK – later to become known as the EU-3 – launched a diplomatic initiative to engage Iran, make it reveal the details of its nuclear programme, and find an international arrangement which would guarantee that Iran would not advance towards building nuclear weapons. As

a result of the EU-3 activities, on 21 October 2003 the Tehran Declaration was adopted and on 15 November 2004 the parties signed the Paris Agreement. By implementing the Tehran Declaration, Tehran suspended its uranium enrichment and processing activities and granted the IAEA wide access to its nuclear facilities beyond the standard safeguard agreement which Tehran was party to.

This joint pressure on Tehran, which also included the Russian efforts described above, was effective. On 18 December 2003, Tehran signed the IAEA Additional Safeguards Protocol to NPT, and Iran thereby committed itself to submitting a more detailed declaration of its nuclear activities and provide the IAEA with wider access to its nuclear facilities. Furthermore, Tehran pledged to start acting in accordance with the Protocol immediately: even before its ratification by the Iranian parliament. Russian officials openly claimed Iran's accession to the Protocol as Moscow's and even Putin's achievement (Parker 2009: 253)

These developments did not resolve the international problem of Iran's nuclear programme completely, yet they diminished its significance relative to other pressing issues of international politics as seen by key international players and their allies (in this case, the US, Israel, European countries and Arab nations).

In addition, beginning in 2003 the US and its allies became increasingly bogged down in the growing conflict in Iraq. This made them vulnerable to Iran, as the latter was not only a neighbouring country to Iraq but also had numerous opportunities to support Iraqi insurgents. Before the conflict became a civil war fought along sectarian lines, in May 2003 to February 2006 it was the US and allied forces that were the targets of Iraqi insurgents. Although this study does not analyse the issue, it seems that there was a negative correlation between the involvement of US-led coalition forces in Iraq and US-led efforts to halt the Iranian nuclear programme: the latter may have become more pronounced when the former diminished and the exposure and vulnerability of the US-led coalition to probable Iranian-supported violence decreased.

The Russian government felt that this moment was convenient to continue its nuclear project with Tehran. On 18 June 2004, minister Rumyantsev pledged: "Russia will never stop its nuclear cooperation with Iran despite the foreign pressure."

However, Moscow looked to make the cooperation more acceptable to the West, an endeavour in which it succeeded. On 27 February 2005, Russia and Iran signed the Intergovernmental Protocol on Return of Spent Nuclear Fuel from the Bushehr NPP, along with a schedule of nuclear fuel supplies to Iran. The next day, Emma Udwin, the European

Commission spokeswoman for External Relations, announced that the EU supported the agreement signed by Iran and Russia. Washington also cautiously demonstrated its willingness to support cooperative rather than confrontational approaches. In May 2005, the US government officially supported the European attempt to engage Tehran (Patrikarakos 2013: 212-215).

Long talks with Europeans, which failed to bring visible results for Tehran despite the Iranian government's more than two year-long suspension of enrichment and reprocessing activities, apparently disappointed the Iranian leadership by the summer of 2005. On 8 August 2005, Iran announced that it would resume enrichment-related activities.

Moreover, due to its concern with the escalation of the Iranian nuclear crisis and the possible referral of Iran to the UN Security Council, in autumn 2005 Russia tried to resolve the problem by offering Iran a large share in a uranium enrichment facility based in Russia which was to become a source of fuel for Iran. Western countries supported the Russian idea and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak conducted numerous rounds of negotiations with Secretary of Iranian Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani until February 2006. However, Tehran dragged its feet until no time remained and the issue had to be referred to the IAEA again (Gazeta.ru 02.03.2006).

In the autumn of 2005 Russia entered talks on the Iranian nuclear crisis more actively. Moscow did not want to refer the Iranian case to the UN Security Council with the eventual possibility of sanctions, but it was willing to cooperate with Western nations in the IAEA "to let pressure build on Iran to answer outstanding questions." It should be emphasised that before that time, Moscow "largely avoided direct involvement in negotiations, having little faith in their success (particularly without US participation) and preferring to maintain good relations with both sides" (Patrikarakos 2013: 223-224). On 24 September 2005, Russia supported the resolution of the IAEA Board which proclaimed Iran guilty of violating its obligations under the Safeguards Agreement.

Moscow also looked for its own original ways to restrain Tehran's nuclear ambitions. Thus, in November 2005, during a visit to Iran, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov proposed establishing a joint uranium enrichment venture in Russia, where Tehran would convert its uranium tetrafluoride (UF₄) into uranium hexafluoride (UF₆), and enrich it to low-enriched uranium (LEU) in order to produce nuclear fuel for its NPPs. The idea took on an even larger scale when in January 2006 President Putin described his country's plans to develop a number of multilateral nuclear fuel cycle centres. These facilities were to provide nuclear fuel cycle services on a non-discriminatory basis while preventing access

of new nations to uranium enrichment technology (Loukianova 2008).

On 28 December 2005, the deputy secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Vahidi stated that Iran was willing to consider the proposal. However, not a single real step was taken to implement the arrangement.

8.1.2. Interaction over Nuclear Issues in 2006-2010: Mounting Pressure on Iran

The escalation of international tensions over Iran's nuclear programme resulted in Iran's nuclear case being referred to the UN Security Council. In 2006-2010 it adopted eight resolutions with regard to Iran's nuclear programme; international pressure on Iran was hence being applied by a global multilateral organisation, which was not the case for previous US sanctions. Escalation of the Iranian nuclear problem completely changed the situation for the external relations of Iran and its international standing.

First, on 24 September 2005, European countries and the US succeeded in making the IAEA Board issue a resolution on Iranian nuclear activities stating Iran's non-compliance with its international obligations. Notably, Russia and China were also involved, which until that time had remained largely aloof from negotiations over the Iranian nuclear programme.

Reacting to the IAEA resolution, on 29 September 2005 the Iranian parliament immediately adopted a draft law suspending the implementation of the Additional Safeguards Protocol until Iran's right to "peaceful use of nuclear energy" was recognised. On 10 January 2006, Iran publicly announced its resumption of research and development activities at another major facility, Natanz nuclear enrichment plant, which unsurprisingly caused a negative reaction from Western nations.

Thus, in January 2006 six countries interested in preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons established a broader coalition which would ultimately resolve the 2015 crisis: the so-called P5+1 group included five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany. Establishment of this coalition was instrumental in ensuring the adoption of subsequent resolutions by the UN Security Council.

On 17 January 2006, Lavrov stated that sanctions are not the best or only way of resolving the Iranian nuclear problem. However, in January 2006, Russia joined the P5+1. A high-level official of the US State Department dealing with the Iranian nuclear crisis at the time, William J. Burns, believed that "the alignment of Britain, France, Germany and the US throughout 2005 had been adequate, but [...] the addition of Russia and China would show

Iran that driving a wedge between Russia and China and Europe and the USA would be more difficult” (Patrikarakos 2013: 227).

On 6 February 2006, the IAEA expressed “serious concern” over the Iranian nuclear programme and referred it to the UN Security Council. However, the confrontation over Iran's nuclear ambitions was still not set in stone. On 1 March 2006, during a meeting in Moscow with Igor Ivanov, the Russian Security Council Secretary, the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, Ali Larijani, confirmed the significance of consultations for resolving the issues related to the Iranian nuclear programme through diplomacy and within the IAEA. On 22 March 2006, Putin and Chairman Hu Jintao of China issued a statement on the necessity of resolving the Iranian nuclear issue in a diplomatic way.

On 1 June 2006, William J. Burnes and Condoleeza Rice, speaking at a joint press conference in Vienna, promised to enter into direct bilateral talks with Iran if the latter would suspend enrichment and allow resumption of IAEA inspections. Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki replied that Iran would be willing to talk with Washington, but it would not suspend enrichment prior to that. On 31 July 2006, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1696 demanding the suspension of uranium enrichment activities by Iran.

On 7 September 2006, ahead of the Berlin meeting of G6 countries, Lavrov stated that enforcement measures [*mery silovogo vozdeistviya*] against Iran should be ruled out, and the issue of economic sanctions should be considered in a “comprehensive” way [*kompleksno*].

After discussing the terms for concluding the construction of the Bushehr NPP with Rosatom head Sergei Kirienko in Moscow, on 25 September 2006 Iranian Vice President Gholam Reza Aghazade announced that his country would be able to complete construction of the Bushehr NPP on his own without Russian assistance (Ekspert 26.09.2006).

18 October 2006, Lavrov stated that measures against Iran should be based on IAEA evaluations. On 4 November 2006, Russia managed to make amendments to the Security Council resolution on Iran mitigating it appropriately. On the same day, Lavrov stated that Russia would not support stronger sanctions against Iran in exchange for permission to construct the Bushehr NPP.

However, in early November 2006, Russia's position started to change – most probably

because mutual understanding was failing as Tehran continued to pursue assertive policy in nuclear dispute. On 7 November 2006 a source in the Russian nuclear industry announced that the joint venture for uranium enrichment would probably not be established. Despite a next day visit to Moscow by the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran Ali Larijani to state that Iran was not declining Russia's proposal on establishing a joint venture, the situation worsened for Iran.

On 2 December 2006, Lavrov announced that Russia was against punishing Iran but not against imposing sanctions that would prevent transfer of nuclear technologies and materials to Iran. Soon after, the media published leaks revealing that the main problems Russia was encountering in constructing the Bushehr NPP were delays with payments by Iran and difficulties in getting equipment from third countries. On the same day, the president of the Russian firm Atomstroyeksport, Sergei Shmatko, met with Iran's Vice President Gholam Reza Aghazade to discuss how to make the funding of Bushehr NPP "more stable."

Russia willingly supported the July 2006 adoption of Resolution 1696 by the UN Security Council. The resolution expressed concern regarding the Iranian nuclear programme and demanded that Tehran stop enriching uranium. However, it stipulated few concrete measures. Moscow responded more actively when the UN Security Council – unsatisfied with Tehran's reaction to the previous resolution – started to debate a harsher resolution in autumn 2006.

Moscow maintained its support for Iran, and it took the Security Council two months to approve Resolution 1737 on 23 December 2006 after the initial draft was introduced by the UK, France and Germany. It was adopted when Tehran refused to stop its uranium enrichment, thus failing to fulfil Resolution 1696. The Security Council Resolution 1737 introduced new sanctions and once again demanded that Iran cooperate with the IAEA. The sensitiveness of the measure is illustrated by the fact that the resolution was adopted only after a phone call by Putin to US President George W. Bush.

To get the support of Russia and China, and also to a lesser degree Qatar, the draft resolution was "watered down" (BBC 23.12.2006). In particular, it dropped a ban on international travel by Iranian officials involved in nuclear and missile programmes and specified items and technologies prohibited for transfer to Iran. In order to get Russian support in particular, the resolution removed one Iranian entity from the list of firms and persons whose assets were to be frozen. Russia also demanded the amendment to the resolution to guarantee Moscow the opportunity to continue its legal nuclear cooperation

with Iran. Moreover, a reference to the constructed NPP in Bushehr present in the initial draft was dropped afterwards. Moreover, at Russia's initiative, a provision was included into the resolution according to which sanctions would be lifted "once the IAEA Board verified that Iran had fulfilled all its obligations." (CNN 23.12.2006)

On 19 February 2007, the Russian media once again discussed the probability that supplies of nuclear fuel and the launch of the reactor in Bushehr could be delayed because of delays in payments by Iran. These publications were related to an official statement by Rosatom claiming that Iran had already delayed payments on the Bushehr NPP for more than a month. On the same day, Tehran dismissed Russian accusations of delayed payments. On 22 February, the deputy director of the Nuclear Energy Organisation of Iran, Mohammad Saidi, announced that Iran was willing to settle any disputes with the Atomstroyeksport over the Bushehr NPP within ten days.

At the same time, Foreign Minister Lavrov told anonymous European officials that although Moscow had officially stated that it had delayed delivery of nuclear fuel solely for financial reasons, in reality the Kremlin had taken an appropriate political decision (New York Times 20.03.2007). The measures against Tehran became harsher after the adoption of Resolution 1747 on 24 March 2007, which added new Iranian entities to the sanctions list.

Meanwhile, Moscow continued to defend Iran against the most dramatic measures proposed by its opponents. On 26 February 2007, Foreign Minister Lavrov made a statement that Russia was worried by the ever more frequent references to possible air strikes on Iran's nuclear energy facilities.

These worries were certainly not exaggerated. On 6 September 2007, the Israeli Air Force destroyed a Syrian nuclear reactor. Persuading US officials to launch a US raid against the reactor, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert insisted that a U.S. strike would "kill two birds with one stone," i.e., Washington would be able to demonstrate Assad's perfidy to the world and "send a message dissuading Iran from pursuing its own nuclear program" (Makovsky 2012).

On 5 March 2007, Rosatom officially warned Iran that no payments had been made for Bushehr for 21 days. Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and the head of the Organisation for Nuclear Energy of Iran Reza Aghazade retorted that no financial problems existed between Iran and Russia with regard to construction of the Bushehr NPP (Izvestiya 09.04.2007).

After another round of negotiations between Atomstroyeksport and the Organisation for Nuclear Energy of Iran on terms for the construction of the Bushehr NPP, on 12 March 2007 a representative of Atomstroyeksport announced that Russia would not supply nuclear fuel as planned in March, and hence Bushehr would not be launched in September 2007. On 16 March, the head of the Federal Agency for Nuclear Energy, Sergey Kiriienko, once again warned Iran that Russia would not complete the Bushehr NPP out of its own pocket.

On 19 March, *the New York Times* revealed that the Secretary of Russia's Security Council, Sergei Ivanov, had delivered an ultimatum to Ali Hosseini Tash, Iran's deputy chief nuclear negotiator visiting Moscow. The Russian government warned Tehran that if it did not suspend uranium enrichment, Moscow would stop supplying it fuel for the Bushehr NPP as demanded by the UN Security Council. The *Times* referred to anonymous European, American and Iranian officials as sources (New York Times 20.03.2007). The next day, the Russian Security Council dismissed information on the ultimatum. On 26 March, the media published official information that Tehran had resumed payments for construction of the Bushehr NPP. Under these circumstances, Russia was willing to support a new UN Security Council resolution. Resolution 1747, which imposed further sanctions on Iran, was adopted on 24 March 2007.

On 22 April 2007, Iran and Russia signed a protocol on measures ensuring the stable financing of the final stage of construction of the Bushehr NPP. However, once again, on 26 April 2007 Rosatom's head announced that the schedule for completing construction would be determined once Tehran resumed its payments in full, because, "So far the payments cannot be recognised normal."

Despite all this, Russia was still interested in completing the project, according to a statement by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Aleksandr Losyukov on 14 May 2007 in Tehran. On 19 June Kiriienko assured that despite all disputes, construction would continue and the fuel was ready for delivery.

After adopting UN Security Council Resolution 1737, which introduced sanctions against Tehran, the P5+1 tried to arrange direct talks with Iran with the participation of the US during the UN General Assembly session of September 2007. However, Tehran failed to send the expected officials (notably Ali Larijani) to New York. This caused a negative reaction on the part of P5+1.

On 17 October 2007, the US Government designated a segment of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) a "supporter of terrorism" and accused it of

proliferating WMD by developing ballistic missiles. Washington also imposed sanctions on the economic activities of the IRGC and some Iranian banks. At the same time, the EU froze assets of Iran's Bank-e Melli bank and extended travel bans on new Iranian nationals involved in the country's nuclear and missile programme.

By as late as 2007 the US itself had still failed to take a cogent position on the Iranian nuclear programme. While in October 2007 President Bush warned that Iran's acquiring nuclear weapons could cause "World War III," in December the US National Intelligence Council published a report on Iran's nuclear capabilities and plans. It insisted that in autumn 2003 Tehran had given up its nuclear weapons programme and did not possess nuclear weapons at the moment.

Nevertheless, the momentum of international pressure on Iran to give up its nuclear programme kept growing. By attempting to engage Iran and negotiating a growing number of sanctions – as opposed to threats and other forceful measures – the US succeeded in gaining "global support to brand Iran's nuclear programme as something impermissible" (Patrikarakos 2013: 244). The advancement of Iran's nuclear programme in and of itself caused a reaction as well. Thus in 2006-2007, most Arab states of the Persian Gulf expressed their interest in acquiring nuclear technology.

On 3 March 2008, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1803, which extended asset and travel restrictions to additional persons and entities, prohibited the transfer to Iran of dual-use materials and equipment, urged governments to stop backing trade with Iran financially, and put two of Iran's banks under surveillance. The subsequent Resolution 1835, adopted on 27 September 2008, confirmed the previous four resolutions on the Iranian nuclear programme and demonstrated that the West could still work with Russia despite tensions between Moscow and the West.

Starting in ca. late 2007, Moscow weakened and even abandoned its support for Iran in the UN Security Council, apparently seeking to keep the dispute over the Iranian nuclear programme within the framework of international bodies where Russia had more influence, all while continuing to work on the Bushehr project. Thus, it let the Security Council pass Resolution 1803 on 3 March 2008.

Furthermore, Russian representative to the UN Vitaly Churkin even openly admitted that the next resolution on the Iranian nuclear programme, adopted on 27 September 2008, was Russia's idea (BBC 28.09.2008). It confirmed the previous demands the UN Security Council had made of Iran but introduced no new sanction. Foreign Minister Lavrov emphasised that the new resolution should promote "the primary goal [of the P5+1] – to

help the IAEA ascertain that there is no military dimension to the nuclear program in Iran. ... The six [nations] are committed to that aim” (Voice of America 05.10.2008).

Indeed, the resolution can be considered an attempt to demonstrate unity and overcome the tensions between Russia and Western nations following the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war. Moreover, just before the UN Security Council adopted the resolution, Russian Lavrov left high-level talks on Iran's nuclear programme, announcing that it was too early to impose more sanctions on Tehran.

Nevertheless, Russia continued to drift towards a more critical stance on the Iranian nuclear programme, all while Washington became more directly engaged in talks with Tehran. On 20 March 2009, US President Barack Obama issued a video message to Iran. He confirmed the US commitment to democracy in resolving the crisis over Iran's nuclear programme. Immediately after that, on 8 April, the State Department announced that it would join the P5+1 in their talks with Tehran as a “full participant.” Iranian President Ahmadinejad welcomed these plans.

However, in September 2009 Tehran only sent the P5+1 a package of general ideas on how to resolve the crisis over its nuclear programme. At the same time, Iran revealed the existence of a previously undeclared pilot fuel enrichment plant at Fordow. As a result, the crisis over the Iranian nuclear programme escalated.

At this point, President Medvedev effectively sided with the Americans and agreed that Iran's Fordow nuclear facility, whose existence was revealed in September 2009, constituted a grave violation to existing agreements by Tehran (Mizin 2010: 6). After the Fordow plant was revealed, it was Moscow – at the US's request – that negotiated with Tehran over a possible deal to send most of Iran's uranium to Russia and France for enrichment.

Russia secured Tehran's agreement to the deal, and Russian support reportedly proved to be “crucial” (Patrikarakos 2013: 256). The Kremlin had a very important reason for this: at the time, the Russian government had succeeded in persuading the Obama administration to cancel the missile defence system in Eastern Europe, which was apparently intended to defend the region against missile attacks from Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. At the time, the international media widely speculated that Obama revising US plans on missile defence in Europe would lead Russia to support sanctions on Iran.

At the same time, Moscow reached a deal with Washington on a takeover by Rosatom, the Russian State Nuclear Energy Corporation, of Uranium One, a Canadian company which

was extracting uranium, *inter alia*, in the US and Central Asia. Rosatom acquired the company in three instalments beginning in 2009 and ending in early 2013, hence becoming one of the largest uranium producers in the world and acquiring control of over 20 percent of US uranium reserves in the process.

This happened despite opposition from US congress and with top US executive officials supporting the deal only as part of a wider *quid pro quo* arrangement (New York Times 23.04.2015). This meant that Washington was taking heed not only of the general needs of Russia, but also of the particular needs of the Russian nuclear industry, which had the most to lose if cooperation with Iran were diminished or stopped.

In addition to helping the US with the deal on Iranian uranium (which later failed, although not because of Russia), Russia started to demonstrate its understanding of US concerns over Iran publicly. President Medvedev implicitly criticised the Iranian nuclear programme in his address to the UN General Assembly on 24 September 2009 and hinted at Russia's willingness to support more sanctions against Tehran (Kremlin.ru 24.09.2009).

Medvedev commented on the issue far more explicitly at a meeting with students and teachers of the University of Pittsburgh the next day. Above all, he emphasised that Russia shares responsibility for the situation in the world with the US and other countries. Secondly, he recognised Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy with no option for developing nuclear arms, adding: "that is our explicit position which in no way differs from the positions of other responsible countries, including the USA." Thirdly, Medvedev doubted the efficacy of sanctions, although he agreed that "if all possible means of exerting influence over the situation have already been tried, then it is possible to resort to internationally legal sanctions" (MID RF 25.09.2009: 6).

After the autumn 2009 talks in Geneva between Iran and the P5+1 failed, along with a previously concluded deal on shipment of Iran's low-enriched uranium abroad for further enrichment, on 8 February 2010 Tehran announced that it would produce nuclear fuel for its research reactor itself by enriching the material to 20 percent. It implemented its decision almost immediately, and talks between Iran and the P5+1 effectively collapsed. Tehran tried to find a solution by making an agreement with Turkey and Brazil on shipment of part of its nuclear material in return for enriched uranium, but that arrangement did not garner broader international support.

On 9 June 2010, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1929. The resolution expanded the arms embargo, prohibited Iran from any activities related to the development of ballistic missiles, provided authorisation of inspection and seizure of any shipments

violating these limitations, extended the asset freeze to the IRGC and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), and established a Panel of Experts. Most importantly, the resolution did not impose an oil embargo.

Facing the recalcitrant and uncooperative behaviour of Tehran on one hand and the unwavering position of Washington on the other, Moscow leaned towards putting more pressure on Iran. Thus, the Kremlin supported UN Security Council Resolution 1929, adopted on 9 June 2010, although together with China it “watered down” the draft before voting. More specifically, Russia and China succeeded in insisting that the resolution introduce no sanctions on the energy sector, which plays a key role in Iran's economy, and no crippling economic sanctions (BBC 09.06.2010).

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov later recalled that when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1929: “we [*the Russian Foreign Ministry*]- behind closed doors [*v zakrytom rezhime*] – made it clear to our colleagues from the US and the EU that Russia would support no further sanctions-related resolutions against Iran. Probably realising the seriousness of this kind of signal, Washington and Brussels decided to opt for illegal unilateral sanctions, thereby causing ever more damage to the established system of international relations and the international legal doctrine” (Mid.ru 20.08.2015).

Indeed, after the new UN sanctions against Iran were introduced, which involved the most extensive involvement of Russia, on 21 August 2010 Russians started loading nuclear fuel for the Bushehr NPP, after which the plant started to be regarded as an active nuclear facility. The US government did not oppose the move and announce that no proliferation risks were related to it. The *BBC* reported that Washington had changed its opinion on the completion of the Bushehr NPP to a more favourable one: “as the price for Russia's vote in the latest round of sanctions against Iran [*in June 2010*]” (BBC 21.08.2010). On 12 September 2011, the plant was officially opened and on 23 September 2013 operational control of the Bushehr NPP was transferred to Iran.

On 1 July 2010, President Obama signed new US sanctions against Iran into law; these included halting Iranian imports of refined oil products and limiting Tehran's access to the international banking system. This did not affect Tehran's position, and another round of negotiation between Iran and the P5+1 in January in Istanbul yielded no results, as Iran refused to discuss any Western proposal before economic sanction were lifted. As David Patrikarakos noted, between the end of 2012 and the April 2012 Istanbul negotiations: “Iran had made considerable progress on the [*nuclear*] programme while largely refusing even to meet with the P5+1” (Patrikarakos 2013: 274).

Meanwhile, Tehran's international situation was deteriorating in both political, diplomatic and economic terms. At around that time, Iran began to encounter increasing criticism from the IAEA. Thus, in September 2011, the Board of Governors criticised Iran for insufficient cooperation with the IAEA, in particular for non-compliance with different Security Council resolutions and banning two IAEA inspectors.

In short, by 2011 international pressure on Iran involved a wide array of measures and restrictions from multiple states and international organisations. As pressure reached new levels of intensity it gained an ever more universal character, further harming Iran's vitally important energy industry.

In September 2011, the head of the Expediency Council and a major Iranian politician, Hashemi Rafsanjani, criticised President Ahmadinejad at the Assembly of Experts for downplaying the consequences of sanctions. He reportedly stressed that "the country had never faced such intense international pressure, which was increasing each day. Wherever Iran found a loophole [...] the Western powers blocked it" (Patrikarakos 2013: 267).

Pressure on Tehran continued to increase in 2012 and 2013. On 23 January 2012, the EU decided to place an embargo on Iranian oil, beginning in July and freezing the assets of the Central Bank of Iran, essentially the national bank of the country. By that time, European countries had overcome their dependence on Iranian oil and the entire EU reduced its imports from Iran by nearly a half.

To understand the extent to which Europe's position towards Tehran had changed – due above all to Iran's nuclear programme – it is useful to compare the situation of the early 2010s with the late 1990s. At that point, European countries had refused to join the US in its sanctions against Iran, and in October 1997 the EU even threatened to file a complaint in the World Trade Organisation against the US ILSA Law, which was adopted in 1996 and aimed to punish investments in Iran.

European nations insisted on their right to cooperate with Tehran. For instance, in September 1997 the French oil company Total signed a \$2bn contract with Tehran on development of an Iranian natural gas deposit together with Russia's Gazprom and Malaysia's Petronas. Acting explicitly against the US ILSA Law and defying US attempts to stop the deal with Iran, the French business community received the unequivocal support of the French government in this undertaking (Rieck 1998: 83). Facing Paris's intransigence, Washington let the deal go through in the 1990s. By the early 2010s, European business had not only withdrawn from Iran, but essentially joined the US in closing the last business options for Iran.

In 2011-12, The US also succeeded in persuading three of Iran's key economic partners in Asia, namely India, South Korea and Japan, to scale back or even renounce their oil imports from Iran, and asked Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to compensate for the disappearance of Iranian oil from those markets. This was a hard blow, as Japan, for instance, was the third largest customer of Iran's petroleum industry.

Even a global power like India, which was a major customer of Tehran and continued to purchase Iranian oil, could not ignore the sanctions. After the last way to make payments – through Turkey's *Halkbank* – was cut off in 2013, Indian refiners started to hold 55 percent of their oil payments to Iran. As a result, by early 2016, the amount of stalled funds reached \$6.4bn and unlocking them remained a problem even in 2016 after a nuclear deal with Iran was concluded (Reuter 06.05.2016). Under these circumstances, in 2013 the Iranian government decided to seek an agreement with the West on its nuclear programme.

8.1.3. Interaction over Nuclear Issues in the 2010s: Resolution of the Crisis over Iran's Nuclear Programme

In March 2013, secret talks between the US and Iran started in Oman. In August 2013, the newly elected Iranian president Hassan Rouhani encouraged the resumption of negotiations with the P5+1 on the Iranian nuclear programme. The next month US Secretary of State John Kerry met with Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (Reuters 24.11.2013).

After several rounds of talks between Iran and the P5+1, on 24 November 2013 they signed the Joint Plan of Action, an interim agreement on the Iranian nuclear program. The Plan provided for a short-term freeze of some segments of Iran's nuclear program and more intrusive and frequent inspections by the IAEA in exchange for reduced economic sanctions on Iran, as Iran and the P5+1 negotiated a longer-term solution to the crisis. Implementation of the agreement started on 20 January 2014 and continued smoothly as the parties negotiated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The latter was adopted by Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and the EU) on 14 July 2015.

Under the JCPOA, Iran was to eliminate its stockpile of medium-enriched uranium, reduce its stockpile of low-enriched uranium by 98%, and reduce the number of its gas centrifuges by about two-thirds for 13 years. For the next 15 years, Iran was only to enrich uranium up to 3.67% and was forbidden from building any new heavy-water facilities. For the next ten years, Iran was obliged to limit its uranium-enrichment activities to a single facility. To verify Iran's compliance with the JCPOA, the IAEA would be granted access to all Iranian

nuclear facilities. In return for compliance with the JCPOA, Iran would receive relief from US, EU, and United Nations sanctions imposed in connection with its nuclear programme.

8.2. Russian Concern over Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

As early as 1993, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) issued a report indicating that Iran was implementing a programme of “military applied [*voenno-prikladnye*] studies” in the nuclear sphere, although without external assistance Tehran would not be able to acquire nuclear weapons until the end of the millennium (SVR 1993). In its next report on the issue, the SVR modified its stance, announcing:

“No convincing evidence of implementation of a co-ordinated comprehensive military nuclear programme has so far been found. The current state of [Iran's] industrial potential is such that without outside help Iran would not be able to establish production of weapons-grade nuclear materials” (SVR 1995). However, these assessments did not prevent Russia from concluding a series of nuclear deals with Iran. As described earlier in this chapter, if not for the pressure of third parties, Moscow would have provided Tehran with much more sophisticated and advanced nuclear equipment, materials and technologies useful for military purposes in the 1990s.

Moscow started to express concern over Iran's ambitions, especially its nuclear programme, in the mid-2000s. For several years it maintained a very ambivalent position, and Russian officials vacillated between supporting other countries concerned over Tehran's plans and actions and defending Iran in face of international pressure.

Thus, in March 2005, Aleksei Pushkov, a leading Russian expert on foreign policy known to be very close to the Kremlin, conceded that it was “dangerous” for Russia to be a neighbour of a nuclear Iran. According to him, Russia should counter Iran's attempts to develop nuclear weapons while cooperating with Tehran on peaceful use of atomic energy. This could be accomplished, for instance, by ensuring the removal of spent nuclear fuel from Iran (Ekho Moskvyy 15.03.2005). His statement on the issue implicitly agreed that Iran was probably developing nuclear weapons. This meant that Russia's disagreement with the West pertained to how precisely to stop Tehran, not whether it should be stopped.

One of the first examples of a Russian official publicly articulating concern over Iran's ambitions was a statement by the Assistant to the Russian president Sergei Prikhod'ko in March 2006. He announced:

“In Iran, Russia has no [particular] interests of its own which are different from those of our European partners, the United States and other countries ... our interests require that

Iran be a predictable state, and that no threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction come from Iran or, for that matter, from other countries, too.” (Vesti.ru 07.03.2006).

Just hours before Putin met Olmert, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reiterated that Moscow did not see an immediate threat coming from Iran and any actions against Iran should correspond to actual developments (Reuters 19.10.2006). Responding to information about a probable Russian ultimatum to Iran to suspend uranium enrichment by March 2007, an unspecified high-level European official told *the New York Times*: “We consider this a very important decision by the Russians. It shows that our disagreements with the Russians about the dangers of Iran’s nuclear program are tactical. Fundamentally, the Russians don’t want a nuclear Iran” (New York Times 20.03.2007).

Evidence from other sources confirms this position. Following a visit by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert in October 2007, his aides stated that he was under the impression that Russia’s public rhetoric was different from reality as Putin saw it. A member of Olmert’s team commented that the Russian government had its own ideas in mind, but they did not go beyond a wish “to lead processes”, and the Kremlin at any rate did not want Iran to become a nuclear-armed state (Ynetnews 19.10.2007). Indeed, as indicated above, since 2007 Moscow consistently supported the group of nations opposing Iran’s nuclear ambitions, although for political reasons it sometimes articulated different views.

In February 2009, during a comment on his government’s plans for a missile-defence system in Europe, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates suggested: “incorporating them [Russians] in a partnership that makes them a full partner in missile defense, because ... the missiles the Iranians are testing can reach a good part of Russia, as well as Eastern Europe and a part of Western Europe” (New York Times 03.03.2009).

Under the influence of American arguments, Moscow started to believe that Iran could become dangerous if it further developed its nuclear and missile capacities. At the first meeting between President Obama and President Medvedev in April 2009 in London, the latter told his American counterpart that Washington had “probably been more correct” in assessing Iran’s ballistic missile capacities. In September 2009, Assistant to the Russian President Sergei Prikhodko and later Foreign Minister Lavrov informally told an US official that they were surprised and worried by photographs of the Iranian secret nuclear facility that Americans had shown them (Roxburgh 2011: 266). In the joint news conference of the Russian and American Presidents that followed, President Medvedev announced that “in some cases the use of sanctions is inevitable” which was widely

perceived by the media as referring to Iran's ambitions.

Views on the Iranian nuclear threat of Russia's military officials evolved as well, though they clearly stayed in line with the official view. In December 2007, the Chief of Russia's General Staff, Yuri Baluyevski, dismissed American worries over the threats posed by Iran's nuclear and missile programmes to other countries (RBK 15.12.2007).

In contrast, in April 2012, his successor Nikolai Makarov publicly recognised that Iran, alongside North Korea, posed an international security threat due to its existing or potential nuclear weapons. According to him, in this regard Russian concerns were confirmed by analysis conducted jointly with Americans, and Moscow agreed to the necessity of establishing a missile defence system (RIA Novosti 24.04.2012). On the whole, his statement amounted to an acknowledgement of the existence of Iran's nuclear threat to Russia, although he failed to express that explicitly and provided no details on how Tehran's acquiring nuclear missiles could affect Russia and its interests.

The timing of these statements, along with other details (in particular admissions about the US role in convincing Russia to change its views on Iran's ambitions), indicate that Moscow mostly followed trends in the international community. In other words, its growing concern over Iran's actions did not result from a bilateral relationship with Tehran or a direct threat to Russia posed by Iran's military might.

8.3. (F)SU Nations' Concerns Regarding Iran's Nuclear Programme and Pressure from Third Parties

Analysing the policies of the three very different (F)SU states examined here with regard to cooperation with Iran given the latter's nuclear programme makes it possible to investigate whether they moved to stop cooperation with Iran out of their own concern for the implications of the programme or did so under pressure of and because of the incentives provided by third parties (nations, coalitions of nations, etc.). This is possible as the extent and variety of international engagement and entanglement of these three post-Soviet states differed significantly.

Russia played a major part in the crisis over the Iran's nuclear programme. At first glance, Moscow's policies may seem contradictory. Russia apparently helped Iran with its case at the IAEA in the mid-2000s, although it is not clear the extent to which Russians cooperated in the undertaking with China, thus making its own position more tenable. According to recollections of Peter Jenkins, the British ambassador to the IAEA in 2001-2006, the Russians and Chinese secretly shared and discussed drafts of the IAEA resolutions, which

that Europeans had prepared, with Iranians before putting them forth for discussion (Patrikarakos 2013: 224). Nevertheless, the numerous examples quoted above illustrate the Russian government's concern over Tehran intentions and actions.

The Kremlin gradually increased its support for efforts of the international coalition which opposed Iran's nuclear efforts. Certainly, the actions of third parties played major part here. According to Viktor Mikhailov, Russia's Minister for Nuclear Energy in 1992-1998, as far as Iran-related issues were concerned President Yeltsin "went along with the Americans." Because of that, his ministry had to give up constructing an enrichment plant in Iran and stop the delivery of a heavy-water reactor to Iran (Novaya gazeta 09.03.2006).

By the late 2000s - early 2010s this support was already open and full-fledged, although the Kremlin publicly excluded the military option for dealing with Iran. Whether the latter clause was absolute is a moot point. Russian leadership demonstrated willingness to cut deals over third countries, even dropping its alleged allies, such as Libya in 2011.

Moscow's situation was difficult. It had an immediate interest in stopping military and military-applicable aspects of Iran's nuclear programme while ensuring its business in the country continued. In 2003 it was most likely Russian pressure that played the decisive part in forcing Tehran to stop the the weaponisation of its nuclear programme (Parker 2009: 221 and *passim*)

The Bush Administration in the USA had been trying to convince the Russian government to stop helping Iran complete the Bushehr NPP for years (New York Times 20.03.2007). Moscow was not completely unyielding, but it had a huge financial interest in the Bushehr deal. Hence, the Kremlin was willing to use the issue as a bargaining chip, although sometimes it quite openly demonstrated its willingness to comply with American wishes if Washington could propose the suitable conditions.

Washington realised this. Since late 2005, the Bush Administration in the USA supported the idea of a joint Russian-Iranian venture to enrich uranium for Iran in Russia. This way, Russia could earn tens and even hundreds of millions of dollars while Iran would receive only uranium for running nuclear power reactors and not weapons-grade enriched material. This was an attempt by the US Government to "create a commercial incentive for Russia to put pressure on Iran" (New York Times 20.03.2007). In the end, the idea failed because Tehran insisted on its right to enrich uranium on its own territory.

In sum, despite frequent claims that Russia obstructed Western attempts to put pressure on Tehran in the late 2000s and 2010s, the actual degree of Russia's cooperation with the US

and other Western countries on Iran was increasing. As US President Obama admitted: “all three of us [*President Medvedev of Russia and President Hu of China*] entirely agree on the objective, which is making sure that Iran does not weaponize nuclear power and that we don't trigger a nuclear arms race in the region. That's in the interests of all of us.” (The White House 14.11.2011)

Russia also effectively collaborated with Western countries over the course of the 2013-2015 negotiations that led to the conclusion of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). This was acknowledged in the West, and German Foreign Minister Steinmeier emphasised:

“After all, we have had different experiences with Russia: on one hand, there is the annexation of Crimea, which violates international law, and the destabilisation of Eastern Ukraine. Almost at the same time however, Russia also contributed to making the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear conflict a success.” (Der Tagesspiegel 15.05.2016)

While Russia dithered until the mid-2000s, by the late 1990s Ukraine had fallen in line with the policies of the Western-dominated international coalition opposing Iran's nuclear programme. After Ukraine gained its independence, Tehran pinned considerable hopes on cooperating with it, including in the nuclear sphere. As early as 1992, Iranians also sought out technologies for uranium enrichment and heavy water production in Ukraine.

Moreover, Ukraine's Security Council reportedly authorised a visit to a uranium extraction enterprise in the vicinity of Zhovti Vody (Novaya gazeta 09.03.2006).

Ukrainian firms directly participated in construction of the Bushehr NPP. Nevertheless, as early as 1998, the Kharkiv-based Turboatom cancelled a contract on delivery of two turbines for Bushehr. The decision to cancel the order was taken at the highest level, by President Kuchma after a visit from US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Kyiv faced the consequences: disruption of the deal led to an almost 1.5-year interruption in high-level contacts.

Later, the governments of the two countries discussed the possibility of Ukrainians working in Iranian nuclear projects. This was a major point in the agenda of President Khatami's visit to Ukraine in October 2002 (Iran International 2002e). Nevertheless, after the incident with Turboatom, Ukrainian firms avoided working with the Bushehr project and Kyiv on the whole towed the Western line in the nuclear field. Perhaps the last time leading Ukrainian experts and the media discussed possible nuclear cooperation with Iran was in August-September 2005 (Saprykin 2005; Horbulin & Shevtsov 2005). When the crisis over the Iranian nuclear programme escalated in the late 2000s, Kyiv started to

reduce other forms of defence-related cooperation with Tehran (a case in point is the joint project by the Ukrainian Antonov firm); by the early 2010s it had reduced all relations with Tehran to a minimum.

While Ukraine's move to oppose Tehran's nuclear efforts can be interpreted as a symptom of its desire to draw closer to the West (which is reflected in its rapidly increasing Index of Engagement with the West as calculated in Chapter Four), a wish to appease the West cannot explain Belarus's position.

Minsk consistently maintained its distance from the West. Although it was never involved in the implementation of Iran's nuclear programme, in the mid-2000s it explicitly and unreservedly supported the Iranian nuclear programme. In an interview with the Russian newspaper *Zavtra* in December 2006, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka announced: "The position of Belarus is that nobody in the world should have nuclear weapons". He then added the rhetorical question: "Iran is the richest country. It defends its atomic programme. Russia has nuclear weapons, as well as probably North Korea, China, Pakistan and India in that region. In that case, why shouldn't Iran have them too?" (*Zavtra* 04.10.2006)

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry also clearly supported Iran's right to implement its nuclear programme following the appropriate international treaties (e.g., MID Belarusi 24.10.2006), although it generally avoided issuing political statements in support of Iran (in contrast to its constant support of China). Minsk also provided some cautious help to Iran in international organisations, for instance by voting at the IAEA on Iran's nuclear programme and the IAEA report of the General Director to the UN Security Council about the situation surrounding Iran's nuclear programme. In the IAEA Board, the resolution was supported by 27 nations, including China and Russia. Syria and Venezuela voted against the resolution, while Belarus, Algeria, Indonesia, Libya and South Africa abstained (Fayazmanesh 2008: 184).

Minsk remained favourable to Tehran on these positions until the late 2000s, and concurrently developed various projects with it. Nevertheless, it rapidly wrapped up all major projects with Iran and avoided any political support for the country starting in 2011 and lasting until the first major steps towards resolving the Iranian nuclear programme crisis were taken in 2013.

The contemporary international political developments surrounding Iran's nuclear programme and defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations are presented in the following Table 22:

Table 22. Major International Political Developments surrounding Iran's Nuclear Programme and Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and (F)SU Nations in 1992-2015.

Year	Major International Political Developments surrounding Iran's Nuclear Programme	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and Russia (transfers, \$, million)	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and Ukraine (transfers, \$, million)	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation between Iran and Belarus (transfers, \$, million)	
1992		500	40	0	
1993					
1994					
1995				<5	
1996					
1997					
1998		300			
1999					
2000		250	30	10	
2001					
2002	Publication of information on Iran's secret nuclear facilities (August)				
2003	Iran signs the IAEA Additional Safeguards Protocol to NPT (18.12)				
2004					
2005	Iran announces its resumption of enrichment-related activities (08.08)				
2006	Establishment of the so-called group P5+1 (January); Referral by the IAEA of Iran to UN SC (06.02); UN SC Resolution 1696 (31.07); UN SC Resolution 1737 (23.12)				
2007	UN SC Resolution 1747 imposes further sanctions on Iran (24.03)				
2008	UN SC Resolution 1803				150

	(03.03); UN SC Resolution 1835 (27.09)			
2009				
2010	UN SC Resolution 1929 (09.06)			
2011				
2012			<10	
2013	Adoption of the Joint Plan of Action - JPA (24.11)	<100		<5
2014	Implementation of the JPA (started 20.01)			
2015	Adoption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – JCPOA (14.07)	300	0	

Note. Calculated and compiled by the author.

Table 22. above demonstrates clear links between increasing international pressure over Iran and the (F)SU nations' moves to restrict their defence-related cooperation with the country. Cooperation between all three post-Soviet nations and Iran became negligible by around 2010-2011.

8.4. Conclusions

The behaviour demonstrated by Russia, Ukraine and Belarus confirms the hypothesis tested in this Chapter. Iran's nuclear efforts, which involved actions and statements perceived as indicators that the country was building nuclear weapons, challenged the international post-bipolar system and triggered an ever-harsher response of the US, the West and broader international community over time.

This perceived threat to international power hierarchy and global order resulted in a growing coalition of countries opposing Tehran's nuclear programme; moreover, countries that were not fully part of this coalition also eventually fell in line with countries directly opposing Iran's nuclear ambitions. For example, Ukraine never considered the Iranian programme a threat to itself, and on the contrary often viewed Iran as an opportunity. Belarus hardly contributed to Iranian nuclear efforts but it certainly did not see Iran's nuclear ambitions as a menace to itself either.

Opinions of politicians, experts and the media in Russia were more mixed. Although there

were some voices of caution concerning the direct threat to Russia of Iran's nuclear programme, they remained rather marginal and were largely a response to increasing international pressure on Iran in the late 2000s. Russia's concerns over Iran's conventional military activities and subversive actions – analysed in preceding chapters – were much more pronounced and distributed in time. On the whole, throughout most of the period under consideration, Moscow was eager to provide Iran with even more equipment, technologies and expertise: in both the conventional military sphere and the nuclear field that it finally had done. In other words, Moscow was not only unconcerned about Iran's nuclear programme most of the time, but in the late 2000s and early 2010s it even strived to make the programme more advanced.

The findings presented here indicate that there are grounds to link the (F)SU nations' changing position on cooperation with Iran to the actions of third countries. Moreover, this did not usually involve unilateral action, but rather actions on behalf of an ever-wider coalition of nations and the UN Security Council. Iran, which challenged the international order with its nuclear programme, provoked a reaction from that order and the countries which can be considered its stakeholders (i.e., the Western community of nations) as well as their allies (Arab countries). (F)SU nations were forced to go along with this reaction.

The reaction to this challenge to the international post-bipolar order was comprehensive. It resulted not only in the curbing of Iran's nuclear cooperation, but also in crippling and effectively universal sanctions on Tehran. The latter caused most countries to cut off links with Tehran, especially in sensitive fields such as defence-related cooperation, even if those countries never belonged to the original coalition opposing Tehran's nuclear ambitions. This is reflected in the dynamics of defence-related cooperation between Iran and the (F)SU nations presented in this study.

In brief, three post-Soviet nations with very different international entanglements (as illustrated, *inter alia*, by their Index of Engagement with the West presented in Chapter Four) eventually reached the same decision to dramatically reduce or even halt cooperation with Iran, including on defence-related matters. They did this in spite of revenue loss which, as illustrated in the preceding Chapter, was often not fully compensated by alternative sources.

9. Afterword

This study of defence-related cooperation between Iran and three (F)SU nations has confirmed most of the initial hypotheses formulated on the basis of the neorealist approach. Defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations in the period under consideration was also generated by the internal needs of each country involved. That said, it was driven and shaped primarily by structural factors of international politics rather than domestic political factors.

Domestic factors in both Iran and the (F)SU nations remained generally favourable for defence-related cooperation with Iran throughout most of the period under consideration. The defence industries of the collapsing Soviet Union and, later, post-Soviet states needed new foreign markets and partners to survive and had difficulties finding them. The situation in the 1990s and early 2000s was especially difficult.

Beginning in the mid-2000s, the general economic situation in the former USSR and the situation of the defence industries started to improve. However, the new major orders they were beginning to receive (in Russia starting in ca. 2003, in Belarus starting ca. 2012, and in Ukraine starting ca. 2014) never equalled Soviet-era volumes. In other words, post-Soviet defence industries in the 2000s and 2010s were still facing a difficult choice: either find new markets, as (post-)Soviet equipment and technologies were being squeezed out of their traditional markets by Western and Chinese competitors and defence industries failed to conquer any significant new markets, or give up their previous defence-related businesses and perhaps even disappear completely.

Meanwhile, Iran was looking for foreign sources of defence-related equipment, services, technologies and expertise which would help it modernise its own armed forces and defence industries. The need to modernise remained a vital necessity, as numerous actors and developments – both within the country and outside it – continued to threaten Iran's stability, welfare and territorial integrity as well as the survival of its political regime. Given the persistent and severe nature of many of these threats, the Iranian government was generally willing to allocate financial and other resources to procure everything necessary for its armed forces from abroad. The volume of its military expenditures vacillated somewhat, and it is possible that at times lack of funds to buy equipment or services from abroad affected Tehran's decisions regarding procurement.

During most of this period, however, Iran had the money to buy weapons, related services

and technologies. Iran's disrupted deals on military equipment from abroad indirectly indicate that the budget allocated by Tehran to acquire arms remained partly unspent rather than exhausted.

At the same time, Iran strived to develop the capacities of its domestic defence industries and, in official Iranian parlance, *indigenise* [*bumi kardan*] military equipment and related services. These efforts produced few results. By 2015, Iran had proved its ability to maintain older equipment (e.g., aircraft, mechanised armoured vehicles and naval vessels purchased before the 1979 Revolution) and upgrade them to some degree. However, this was insufficient, especially given the rising challenges in contemporary warfare; in order to modernise it required a foreign source throughout the period studied here.

The domestic factors listed above generated almost ideal conditions for defence-related cooperation between Iran and the (F)SU nations to thrive. Iran and the Soviet Union (later Russia, Ukraine and Belarus) complemented each other in many ways. The defence industries of post-Soviet republics wanted to sell and could provide the advanced products Iran needed. Iran needed defence-related equipment, services, technologies and expertise and had almost no other option than to turn to (post-)Soviet nations. Iran also possessed the means by which to pay – via cash or energy sources – and delivered payments quite reliably.

This potentially very lucrative situation could have been harnessed not only by governments and government-controlled entities but also by rogue elements. Nevertheless, despite the administrative chaos and legal uncertainty characteristic of the last years of the USSR and the first years of independence of the former Soviet republics, and despite some rogue elements operating in the sphere of defence-related cooperation, it was governments, government agencies and government-authorized entities which played the principal role in providing Iran with defence-related equipment, services, technologies and expertise.

Moreover, even known examples of rogue actions produced negligible results in terms of transfer or servicing of highly-sophisticated equipment and. In other words, rogue elements proved unable to efficiently help the Iranian armed forces and defence industries absorb the equipment or technologies supplied by them or utilise their services in an efficient way without stable expert and maintenance support from the respective (F)SU government-controlled organisations and entities.

Given that domestic factors in Iran and (F)SU nations reliably favoured defence-related cooperation, as did the respective governments in this cooperation, one should expect stable large-scale cooperation on the modernisation of Iranian armed forces and defence

industries, which should have involved supplying Iran with sufficient amounts of increasingly sophisticated equipment, services and technologies. However, the facts of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations reveal a very different picture.

Iran failed to implement even several already-concluded deals, and relations with the (F)SU were periodically disrupted or severely limited. Cooperation also declined in terms of quality. At the beginning of the period, Iran was able to order and actually receive state-of-the-art Soviet weapons, services and technologies for almost every military aim it had – with the exception of missiles, strategic bombers and some naval arms. Iranians were also able to cooperate with the best (post-)Soviet research centres.

As time passed, Tehran began to face problems making and implementing deals on licensed production of (post-) Soviet equipment on its territory. It also had a harder time acquiring certain more advanced weapons, as well as technical documents on weapons it had purchased from Russia. In addition, Iranians were expelled from many Russian universities (and Ukrainian ones – although details here remain unclear) providing education in science and technology. In the second half of the 2000s, Iran failed even to arrange for the required routine overhaul of equipment from Russian manufacturers (like submarines). What’s more, the systems they did manage to procure were not state-of-the-art and were delivered with many years of delay (like the S-300).

On the basis of known facts on defence-related cooperation between Iran and the (F)SU nations, the following assessments of annual average volumes can be calculated (see Table 23).

Table 23. Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation¹⁷ between (F)SU Nations and Iran, (in constant (2014) US\$, million)

Year	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation between the USSR/Russia and Iran	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation between Ukraine and Iran	Average Annual Volume of Defence-Related Cooperation between Belarus and Iran
1989	643	n/a	n/a
1990			
1991			
1992	738	54	-
1993			
1994			
1995			
1996			7

¹⁷ Effective transfers of all kinds, i.e., equipment, services, technologies, expertise etc.

1997			
1998	426		
1999			
2000			
2001	285	33	11
2002			
2003			
2004			
2005			
2006			
2007			
2008	163		
2009			
2010			
2011	Less than 100	Less than 10	Less than 5
2012			
2013			
2014	300		
2015			
		-	

Note. Calculated and compiled by the author.

The figures above are my own assessments produced by compiling the estimates of other authors (when available) and calculating probable volumes using facts collated in the overview from Chapter Three, keeping in mind that some transfers may remain undisclosed.

However, it is probable that most transfers of equipment and services are known, as during this period Tehran used military parades, drills and other public events to demonstrate its achievements in strengthening its military power. Such events revealed certain projects that Iran's post-Soviet partners had concealed (e.g., Iran and the Ukrainian Malyshev Works cooperation on tank design in the late 1990s-early 2000s).

While absolute figures for cooperation volumes are subject to slight change due to new facts being revealed (Tehran could have concluded deals with (F)SU nations with the mediation or involvement of third countries, especially Syria through the whole period under consideration and Sudan in the 1990s), it is highly unlikely that the whole picture would change in comparative terms, affecting the scale of cooperation in different periods relative to other periods, etc. Major contracts on equipment, services, and technology transfers, among others, constitute the bulk of cooperation volume; these figures are known and quite undisputed. In any case, for the purposes of this study, what was important was detecting the comparative size of cooperation volume for different years and different

countries.

Contradictions between the relative constancy of domestic factors and the volatility of actual cooperation raises the question of what caused this discrepancy. Relying on the structural realist approach, this study explored whether the changes in dynamics of this cooperation could be related to external factors. It followed the tenets of structural realism and developed the latter by revisiting the structural realist thinking about cooperation between nations, and by integrating geopolitical factors.

It also made an attempt to clarify how and when the international system, the most important notion in structural realist thinking, defined as the hierarchies, standards of international behaviour, and legal regimes established and supported by majority of members of the international community, including all major global powers, reacts to challenges to its foundations.

The structural realist ideas of cooperation between countries were reinterpreted to account for possible reactions of third parties to a given case of international cooperation. All reactions were boiled down to two basic types:

- a) responses by individual states and their alliances; and
- b) response by the international community (defined as the majority of the world's states, including major global powers).

Both of these responsive measures are aimed at restricting actions or attitudes of other states. In the first case, the interests and actual policies of cooperating states clash with those of third states, and the third states try to make cooperating states conform to their wishes. In the second case, there is a wide – or even effectively universal – consensus among the world's states that a state is challenging a fundamental standard or convention on which the existing international system rests. This means that other states, by cooperating with the challenging state, contribute to the challenge.

Third states and their coalitions had been opposing defence-related cooperation between Iran and other states ever since the 1979 Revolution. At that point, the ideologically-driven expansionism of Islamist Tehran was widely perceived as a threat. However, the country was not powerful enough to have any chance of being considered a challenge to the fundamental standards and conventions of the existing bipolar system. Individual states acted independently (such as the US, Israel and some Arab states) or by coordinating their efforts with different states (US-Israel, US-Arab states, the Gulf Cooperation Council). These efforts, however, remained limited in scope and efficiency, and were undermined

even by states which were undoubtedly allies of the countries containing Iran (such as European states).

The situation remained similar in the 1990s. Despite the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of opportunities for Iran to balance between two global superpowers, Tehran still found some ways to acquire arms in the post-bipolar world. Chapter Six analysed whether the aspiration of post-Soviet countries to join the community of nations constructing the post-bipolar world which Iran opposed influenced their defence-related cooperation with the country.

After examining possible correlations between the *Index of Engagement with the West* and the level of defence-related cooperation with Iran and looking into respective countries' foreign policies, Chapter Six demonstrated that engagement with the West (in the cases of Ukraine and Russia) or its absence (in the case of Belarus) modified the defence-related cooperation between these states and Iran but by no means stopped it. Indeed, even when striving to become allies with the US in the 1990s or during the first half of the 2000s, Moscow continued to make arms deals with Tehran, thereby undermining the US policy of containing Iran.

The efforts of third parties in the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s – above all the US and its allies – resulted in limiting individual transfers and halting the transfer to Iran of more sensitive and advanced equipment, technologies and expertise, along with related services. This was shown in Chapter Seven, which looked for correlations between measures taken by third parties with regard to defence-related cooperation between Iran and post-Soviet states and the dynamics of this cooperation.

Again, while individual sanctions could have stopped or limited individual projects or transfers (although in numerous cases they failed to achieve that, as proved by the continuing cooperation with Iran even after several rounds of sanctions, e.g., the Russian Tula Instrument Design Bureau), on the whole such sanctions did not influence the general dynamics of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. In light of their lengthy terms (1998-2015) and the number of sanctions applied to post-Soviet entities and persons for their apparent cooperation with Iran on defence-related matters, this study concludes that such individual measures proved largely inefficient.

Remarkably, these efforts failed even though by the early 2000s they were being complemented by other actions from various states aimed at countering defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations. These included various political and economic incentives offered by the US, Israel and Arab states as well as covert subversive

actions or incidents that were probably perceived to be so by those directly involved in projects with Iran. Some actors publicly spoke of their perceptions and reported being watched by foreign intelligence services while working in or traveling to Iran since as early as the mid-1990s (e.g., Dobbs 2002).

Some of these actions, such as offering incentives to (F)SU nations to induce them to give up collaborating with Iran or conducting covert subversive actions to physically remove or intimidate those involved in projects with Iran, were occasionally successful. A case in point is the Ukrainian Antonov firm's reduction in joint projects with Iran after at least two episodes in the early 2000s that could have been perceived as intervention of third parties (a suspicion that was actually voiced, although this interpretation was later suppressed in the mainstream media and politics).

As mentioned above, the most extreme form of reaction of third parties to cooperation between certain states involved the mobilisation of most members of the international community, including major global powers (through the UN, its agencies and other mechanisms). Such phenomenon can be interpreted as the reaction of the international system – driven by a major global power interested in preserving the global status quo – to the non-conformist international behaviour of certain members of the international community which challenge the fundamental standards and conventions on which the existing international system rests.

Iran's actions, which can be seen as indicators that it harboured ambitions of becoming a nuclear armed state, were undoubtedly such a challenge to the existing international system. Although there were examples of states becoming officially nuclear in the post-bipolar world (India and Pakistan in 1998), they effectively developed their nuclear weapons and delivery means in a still bipolar world, when their behaviour was tolerated by global superpowers for pragmatic reasons. In addition, they were not seen to pursue expansionist or ideological ambitions beyond their own neighbourhood.

Another case, that of North Korea, which apparently became nuclear in 2006, provides more insights into the opportunities of going nuclear in a post-bipolar world. Pyongyang pursued its programme in highest secrecy and its international isolation, along with its actions in general, were seen as challenging the existing international system, especially after the end of the Cold War.

In other words, the international community had little leverage over a country that had long ago cut itself off from every country except China. By pursuing a more open but still non-transparent nuclear programme and conducting missile tests which resembled development

of delivery means for nuclear weapons, Tehran was much more connected with the external world than North Korea. That allowed other states and the international community to find many opportunities to react to Tehran's nuclear and missile programmes. Tehran, in turn, was more exposed because of its greater (than Pyongyang's) degree of integration with the external world and had a harder time ignoring external pressure.

The result was a protracted international crisis over Iran's nuclear programme in the late 2000s and early 2010s. As it developed, ever more states started to oppose Iranian nuclear efforts, and in the late 2000s effectively all the major global powers – however some of them cautiously – were openly opposing Tehran's policies, and numerous other states followed suit. Thus, the UN Security Council passed resolutions which granted the international opposition to Iran's nuclear ambitions formal legal form.

Moreover, this time UN sanctions against Iran were supported and implemented almost universally: by major global powers (including Russia and China) and the major trade partners of Iran (like India and Japan). Given the role of the US and the EU in the global economy, their sanctions against Tehran also affected the position of other countries.

Former Soviet republics also effectively stopped cooperation with Tehran in the defence sphere at this time. Whatever their motivation was – be it that their governments were genuinely concerned over Iran's ambitions (especially doubtful in the case of Belarus), they held a conformist attitude towards the international mainstream or even wished to join the Western community, or merely feared being castigated for supporting a state challenging the international system and major global powers determined to preserve the existing global system – the fact is that the crisis over Iran's nuclear programme brought defence-related cooperation between (F)SU nations and Iran to a halt. This cooperation resumed only after multilateral negotiations in 2013-2015 resulted in an arrangement aimed at resolving the issues concerning Iran's nuclear programme.

The crucial role of the nuclear crisis can be illustrated by a brief comparison with defence-related cooperation between (post-)Soviet states and Syria, another radical Middle-Eastern regime which doubled as Iran's ally since the early 1980s. Although Syria was never able to pay as reliably as Iran and its efforts to enhance its own defence capacities and even pursue a rudimentary nuclear programme led to opposition from Israel, the US and some of their allies, Russia never limited its defence-related cooperation with the Syrian regime to the extent it had with Iran. Belarus also cooperated with Syria in the defence sphere in a more extensive way than Iran.

This difference can be explained by the lack of comparable consolidated pressure from the international community on Damascus until the beginning of the civil war in the country in the early 2010s. Indeed, Damascus never pursued such confrontational policies as Tehran, and its nuclear and missile efforts remained primitive, as illustrated by Israel's successful sabotage of Syria's nuclear facilities.

Structural realism focuses on the place of the state in the international system whose most important feature, polarity, is interpreted in terms of a universal power without explicit linkage to a specific geographic location. However, the international system also interacts with space: geographical factors mediate its effects. Both the available capacities of a given state and its geography define its priorities.

So far, the structural realist approach has generally neglected the influence of geographical factors, or geopolitics in its most basic meaning of the word. This study has made an attempt to integrate geopolitical concepts, defined as ideas regarding the influence of geographical factors on political and social developments, into the structural realist approach. The most basic and identifiable notions are used here: the strategic concerns of states and their strategic cooperation.

The proposed concept of strategic concerns rests on the notion of a distance coefficient, which implies that the government of a given country strives to suppress actual or potential threats. The closer these threats are, the more vigorous the efforts of a government to prevent their emergence or strengthening become. This requires of a government to pay special attention to growth in military might of neighbouring states. Secondly, the less trust a government has in a neighbouring state, i.e., only little, if any strategic cooperation takes place between the countries, the more concern the military strengthening of the neighbouring state causes.

As the geographical proximity of states in relation to each other changes only rarely and as a result of dramatic changes, this factor is generally deemed a constant (although Iran and all post-Soviet republics experienced such changes in the period under consideration as a result of the collapse of the USSR). Because of the constant nature of this factor, it cannot explain, *per definitionem*, the changes in dynamics of defence-related cooperation. It can, however, explain the difference in quality – sophistication, offensive vs. defensive features, power projection features – of the equipment, services, technologies and expertise the four countries (the USSR, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus) with very different geographical characteristics as seen in relation to to Iran were willing to provide it.

As expected, the Soviet Union, which shared a long border with Iran that divided large

ethnic groups living in both countries, and Russia, which did not share a land border with Iran but was still a neighbour state, displayed more caution in supplying Iran. Moscow never supplied Tehran with strategic offensive weapons (like missiles of any type or strategic bombers), instead providing it with naval equipment and related services (e.g., submarines and infrastructure for them) that preconditioned Tehran's expansion to the South (the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean) rather than to the North, (the Caspian Sea or Central Asia).

According to the assumptions made in this study, Ukraine and Belarus, both located far from Iran, should have had less scruples. This is confirmed by facts in Ukraine's case: regardless of the degree of the Ukrainian government's involvement, it was Kyiv that supplied Iran with Kh-55, a state-of-the-art cruise missile of strategic importance, which at the end of 2015 was the best means of delivery for nuclear weapons Tehran has at its disposal. Moreover, Ukraine probably also supplied Iran with the Soviet anti-ship missile P-270 Moskit and could have been involved in transferring the advanced Soviet-designed Shkval torpedo.

In contrast, there are no facts available showing that Belarus supplied Iran with advanced or sophisticated equipment. Although this requires further investigation, it is possible to assume that this had to do with the close nature of Belarusian-Russian relations and Moscow's power to convince Minsk to avoid delivering arms to Iran which Moscow did not want Tehran to possess.

The second concept used in this study integrates the structural realist concept of balancing alliances and the geopolitical notion of different values of different places for different regions. It implies the possibility of geopolitical alliances that establish trust in bilateral relations: a necessity for transferring advanced equipment and technologies and providing related services. This study tried to look for possible correlations between Iran and (F)SU nations' strategic cooperation and dynamics of defence-related cooperation.

No such correlation was found in the case of Russia. Thus, several upticks in Russian-Iranian defence-related cooperation occurred at times when the two countries were worried about each other's plans and intentions (such as in the early 1990s when Russia and Iran sometimes opposed each other in Tajikistan and the Balkans, as well as because of Tehran's attempts to provide former Soviet republics with transit routes circumventing Russia); on the other hand, some downturns occurred when there were no identifiable clashes of geopolitical interests (e.g., in the late 1990s).

At any rate, the analysis revealed few common geopolitical projects between Iran and

Russia, and only a couple of them can be considered successful (e.g., on ending the civil war in Tajikistan and intervention in Syria) with considerable reservations as to the definition of “success”. Essentially, this means that Moscow and Tehran did not qualify as strategic partners or even states that had much in common as far as their policies were concerned. This absence of joint geopolitical projects points to a lack of trust between the two states – further confirmed by statements of political and military officials of both countries, as well as political gestures (like Russia's possible holding of military drills to train Caspian states to defend themselves against Iranian attacks in 2011).

In the cases of Ukraine and Belarus, there are more correlations between upticks in defence-related cooperation with Iran and the formers’ proclaimed intentions to use relations with Iran to counterpoise Russia and/or the West. For Ukraine, this was true of the early to mid-1990s, while for Belarus it was the mid- to late 2000s. Although Ukraine's efforts ended in sporadic actions (like trilateral cooperation with Turkmenistan or signing agreements on bringing Iranian gas and oil to the region), they produced either no sustainable results or no results whatsoever. As for Belarus, there were not even attempts at implementing geopolitical projects with Tehran. Thus, these correlations can be said to be immaterial and based largely on rhetoric.

It is certainly true that the dynamics and results of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations cannot be explained by only one factor or only by external factors of the international system. They were shaped by a combination of internal and external factors. Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that factors of the international system – the role of third parties in international cooperation, the response of the international system to the state challenging its fundamental standards and convention – along with geopolitical conditions – played the decisive role in shaping this international interaction.

Analysis of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations proved the validity of the proposed concept of international cooperation. The study raised a major issue which can be formulated as a question about the limits of defiance, or the limits of a state's behaviour when it challenges various international conventions and standards, both formal and informal. The research focused on challenges to two types of international convention: regional power balances and regimes established and backed by global powers.

The efforts of individual states or coalitions to set such limits for a challenging country proved relatively futile. However, when a country challenged the fundamental conventions

of the global order with its non-conformist international behaviour it faced a harsh and comprehensive response. Nuclear non-proliferation can undoubtedly be considered one such convention and a tenet of the international political system. Even nations not aligned with the global powers joined in response to this challenge.

This reaction squares with the implications of the neorealist approach. Challenges which threaten the fundamental tenets of the global political order threaten the international political system as such. The latter reacts with a systemic answer. The situation surrounding the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programmes demonstrate that the international system – defined as a community of states that have formed an *ad hoc* consensus on some fundamental issues and are regulated by some standards and conventions – possesses resilience and reacts to attempts to challenge and disrupt it.

When such challenges become evident, the major global powers are most frequently interested in preserving the existing global *status quo* (although they can seek to change regional constellations of powers) and mobilising the international community (both by persuading and compelling) to respond to challenges to the existing system. Although for some members of the community this challenge to the existing international system might pose no immediate, obvious or direct threat, they have no choice but to conform and side with the powers guarding the existing global order or be accused of supporting the challenging state and be punished along with it. This situation can thus be described as *tertium non datur*.

To summarise, this thesis considered the situation surrounding Iran's defence-related cooperation with (F)SU nations within the conceptual apparatus of structural realism. This framework has proved productive, as Iran's nuclear ambitions, if considered to be a challenge to the international order, should be expected to trigger not only a unilateral response from the main global power players interested in maintaining the existing international order but also multilateral and universal sanctions against Iran.

Unilateral measures proved efficient only in specific cases and to a certain degree. Multilateral sanctions supported by a broad coalition of key international players and legitimised through universal international mechanisms very rapidly and comprehensively stopped defence-related cooperation with Iran. Because of the weakness of Iran's defence industries, in particular its R&D capacities, the ensuing limitations on its use of foreign sources of equipment, services and technologies (from post-Soviet nations, China, North Korea, Pakistan or illegal deals with various actors) meant that Tehran's ambitions to modernise its armed forces and arms industries eventually failed.

The conclusions of this study point to possible areas of further research on several major issues considered here. First of all, international cooperation involving states which challenge the fundamental standards and conventions of the international system deserves more scholarly attention. While nuclear non-proliferation is one such convention, it would be useful to find similar cases regarding other attempts to challenge the international system: redrawing of borders would be an obvious example. Second, the integration of geopolitical notions could be continued by testing the concepts used here on a larger set of examples (these could also involve Iran: Iran's defence-related cooperation with China, Pakistan and North Korea in recent decades could also be analysed).

Researchers could also look for further geopolitical concepts that could be integrated with the structural realist approach. Last but not least, all the minor themes considered here – the development of Iran's armed forces and defence industries, geopolitical concepts and visions of Iran's political and military establishment, Iran's military-strategic thinking – require deeper study using the methodological tools of political science.

Recent decades have seen a shift in political science research on Iran towards domestic policy and ideological issues to the detriment of the themes mentioned above. As a result, this study had to start from the basics, first providing an overview of defence-related cooperation between Iran and (F)SU nations and assessing their volumes and quality and only then moving to investigate the actual issue at stake.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Transfers of Military Equipment from Soviet Union to Iran in 1989-1991.

Type of Equipment	Year of Order	No. Ordered	Year of Delivery	No. Delivered	Comments
MiG-29, Fighter Aircraft	1989	14	1990	14	Possibly second-hand
MiG-29, Fighter Aircraft	1989	(11)	1991	(11)	Possibly second-hand
R-27/AA-10, BVRAAM	(1989)	(100)	1990-1991	(100)	For MiG-29 combat aircraft
R-60/AA-8, SRAAM	(1989)	(400)	1990-1991	(400)	For MiG-29 and Su-24 combat aircraft
R-73/AA-11, SRAAM	(1989)	(300)	1990-1991	(300)	For MiG-29 combat aircraft
S-200 Angara/SA-5	(1989)	(2)	1991	(2)	Second-hand
S-200/SA-5, SAM	(1989)	(40)	1991	(40)	
Su-24/Fencer, Bomber Aircraft	1990	(12)	1991	(12)	Su-24MK version
Kh-29/AS-14 Kedge, ASM	(1990)	(100)	1991	(100)	For Su-24 combat aircraft
Big Back, Air Search Radar	(1991)	(1)	1991	(1)	For use with 1 SA-5 SAM system

Note: Adapted from SIPRI (2016).

Appendix 2. Transfers of Military Equipment from Russia to Iran.

Type of Equipment	Year of Order	No. Ordered	Year of Delivery	No. Delivered	Comments
9M111 Fagot/AT-4, Anti-Tank Missile	(1991)	-	1993-2015	(5050)	For BMP-2 and Boraq IFV
BMP-2, IFV	1991	(413)	1993-2001	(413)	1500 ordered but probably only 413 delivered; 82 delivered direct, rest assembled in Iran; Iranian designation possibly BMT-1500 ordered but probably only 413 delivered; 82 delivered direct, rest assembled in Iran; Iranian designation possibly BMT-2
T-72M1, Tank	(1991)	(422)	1993-2001	(422)	T-72S1 version; 1000 ordered but probably only 422 delivered; 122 delivered direct, rest assembled in Iran
Project-877E/Kilo, Submarine	1991	2	1992-1993	2	\$750 m deal; Iranian designation Tareq; ordered from Soviet Union and delivered from Russia after break-up of Soviet Union
Project-877E/Kilo, Submarine	1993	1	1996	1	\$750 m deal; Iranian designation Tareq; ordered from Soviet Union and delivered from Russia after break-up of Soviet Union
V-46, Diesel Engine	(1993)	(200)	1993-2000	(200)	Iranian designation Tareq
V-46, Diesel Engine	(1993)	(200)	1993-2000	(200)	For modernization of T-54, T-55 and Type-59 tanks to T-72Z; V-46-6 version; supplier uncertain
V-46, Diesel Engine	(1993)	104	1994-1995	104	For 104 T-72M1 tanks from Poland; possibly produced in Poland
9M14M/AT-3, Anti-Tank Missile	(1995)	-	1996-2015	(4550)	Iranian designation RAAD; incl I-RAAD version

2K12 Kvadrat/SA-6A, SAM System	1995	(2)	1995-1996	(2)	Ex-Russian
3M9/SA-6, SAM System	(1995)	(120)	1995-1996	(120)	Second-hand
D-30 122mm, Towed Gun	(1997)	(100)	1998-2002	(100)	Iranian designation Shafie D-301 and/or HM-40
9M113 Konkurs/AT-5, Anti-Tank Missile	(1998)	-	1999-2015	(2900)	Iranian designation probably Towsan-1
Mi-8MT/Mi-17, Transport Helicopter	1998	5	2000	5	For SAR
9M114 Shturm/AT-6, Anti-Tank Missile	(1999)	(500)	2000-2003	(500)	For Mi-171Sh helicopters; possibly incl AT-9 version
BMP-2 (IFV) Turret	(1999)	(130)	2000-2012	(130)	For Boraq IFV produced in Iran (based on WZ-501 APC from China); possibly assembled or produced in Iran; status from 2010 uncertain (due to UN arms embargo)
Mi-8MT/Mi-17, Transport Helicopter	1999	22	2000-2001	22	Incl. some for SAR; Mi-171Sh version
Mi-8MT/Mi-17, Transport Helicopter	2001	(20)	2002-2003	(20)	\$150 m deal; Mi-171Sh version
R-60/AA-8, SRAAM	(2003)	(40)	2006	(40)	For Su-25 combat aircraft; designation uncertain
Su-25, Ground-Attack Aircraft	(2003)	(6)	2006	6	Su-25T version (incl 3 Su-25UBK); for Revolutionary Guard
Tor-M1/SA-15, SAM System	2005	(29)	2006-2007	(29)	\$700m deal (part of \$1 b deal); incl for protection of Iranian nuclear plant
9M338/SA-15, SAM	2005	(750)	2006-2007	(750)	For Tor-M1 (SA-15) SAM systems
1L119 Nebo, Air Search Radar	(2007)	(2)	2010	(2)	
Kasta-2E2, Air Search Radar	(2010)	(2)	2013	(2)	
1L222 Avtobaza, Air Search System	(2011)	(2)	2011	(2)	
S-300PMU-2/SA-20B, SAM System	4	2015			Replacing 2007 order for S-300PMU-1 (SA-

					20A) cancelled 2010 by Russia after UN embargo on Iran; delivery 2016
48N6/SA-10D Grumble, SAM	2015	(150)			For S-300PMU-2 (SA-20B) SAM systems

Note: Adapted from SIPRI (2016)

Appendix 3. Transfers of Military Equipment from Ukraine to Iran.

Type of Equipment	Year of Order	No. Ordered	Year of Delivery	No. Delivered	Comments
S-200/SA-5, SAM	1992	(10)	1993	(10)	Second-hand
An-74, Transport Aircraft	1997	12	1998-2002	(12)	\$133 m deal; incl 8 An-74T-200 and 4 An-74TK-200 version
Kh-55/AS-15 Kent, ACLM	(2000)	(6)	2001	(6)	Second-hand; illegal deal (with documents giving Russia as recipient)

Note: Adapted from SIPRI (2016).

Appendix 4. Transfers of Military Equipment from Belarus to Iran.

Type of Equipment	Year of Order	No. Ordered	Year of Delivery	No. Delivered	Comments
T-72M1 Tank	(1999)	(37)	2000-2002	(37)	Possibly second-hand; supplier could be Russia (as part of Iranian production of T-72)
Vostok-E, Air Search Radar	(2010)	(2)	2011	(2)	

Note: Adapted from SIPRI (2016).

Appendix 5. An Overview of Soviet-Iranian Defence-Related Cooperation before the 1979 Revolution.

Soviet arms supplies to Shah's Iran were not negligible in any respect. The volumes were quite impressive for a country which neither belonged to the Eastern bloc nor followed so called socialist orientation. Between 1973 and 1979, Iran's arms agreements with the SU reached up to \$414m (Mofid 1990: 63). In 1967-1976, Soviet Union delivered to Iran arms which amounted to \$611m and it constituted 12% of Tehran's total arms imports. To compare, neighbouring and smaller Afghanistan in the same period imported Soviet weapons for \$100m which accounted for 32% of its total weapons imports (US Arms Control... 1978: 158-159).

Equipment. Iran received quite a wide array of weapons. After WWII and before 1979, the SU reportedly supplied Iran with medium tanks T-55, amphibious light tank PT-76; amphibious infantry fighting vehicle BMP-1 and BTR-50PK, BTR-60 and BTR-152; 122-mm towed howitzers D-30, 152-mm howitzers D-20 and 130 mm towed field gun M-46; self-propelled anti-aircraft gun ZSU-57-2 and ZSU-23-4; mobile, short-range, low altitude infra-red guided surface-to-air missile systems «Strela-1M» and man-portable, shoulder-fired, low-altitude surface-to-air missile system Strela-2; wire-guided anti-tank guided missile «Malyutka», military trucks ZiL, GAZ, MAZ, KrAZ and UAZ; mobile repairment and maintenance workshops; pioneer, also armoured, vehicles, radiocommunication equipment (Barabanov 2005). According to other sources, Iran also ordered in the 1970s from the SU ASU-85, airborne self-propelled gun (Mofid 1990: 63). Likewise, it is known that in the 1970s Iran ordered from the USSR 6,000 of Strela-2 and 6,000 of Strela-1 SAM systems (Mofid 1990: 63)

Exact numbers and types of most of these weapons remain to a large extent unknown, yet many of these types of military equipment were delivered in significant quantities and remained in service many years after the 1979 revolution. A case in point provide KrAZ-255B heavy-duty off-road trucks which were sporadically seen in video and photos of Iranian armed forces even in early 2010s (Lyamin 2013).

Quite stable and even slightly increasing defence-related cooperation continued also in the last years of existence of Imperial Iran. In December 1976, the Shah transferred an order for anti-aircraft missiles, tanks, and armoured personnel carriers earlier placed with Britain to the Soviet Union (Linde 1978: 230). More specifically, the list of items included BMP-1 (Mofid 1990: 63) and 2,000 Strela-2 anti-aircraft missiles (Azghandi 1384: 324).

The deal in total amounted to 230 million British pounds. The change of the equipment supplier, according to some analysts, might have followed from the fact that the Soviet Union, which imported large volumes of natural gas from Iran, had accumulated

considerable debts with Iran and tried to settle them through delivery of weapons (Linde 1978: 230). However, it is in these years that the Shah pursued increasingly independent of the US foreign and national security policies, and purchasing weapons from non-Western sources fits into this pattern. The last time the Shah's government ordered weapons from the Soviet Union was in November 1978: it wished again to buy Soviet BMP-1 (Mofid 1990: 63).

Repairs and Maintenance. Alongside with buying Strela-2 anti-aircraft missiles, the “bases” [*moghaddamat*] for production of these missiles, as well as some other Soviet weapons, especially the rockets for RPG-7 and BM-21 Grad, within Iran have been established. In the times of war with Iraq, Iran not only bought these types of ammunition from SU and China, but also could assemble [*montazh*] them itself (Azghandi 1384: 324). For overhaul and repairs of Soviet-made artillery guns, armoured vehicles and trucks Babak facility was built with Soviet technical assistance in 1973-76 and started its full-scale operation in 1978 becoming the main repairs facility of the Iran's ground forces (Usov 2005). In Babak barracks, located near Tehran, about 15 civil specialists from Soviet Ukraine worked.

In Isfahan a repair plant for "Shilkas" has been constructed, where the specialists of the Ulyanovsk factory worked on the overhaul, and military specialists – on the current repairs. In Shiraz a training centre has been established where Iranian military personnel learned to maintain the BMP-1. About 10 Soviet military specialists worked in the centre. In addition, in Tehran worked two specialists for BMP guarantee repairs and a specialist for repairs of MAZ trucks (Pochtarev 2003).

Apparently, most of these facilities became basis for further development of maintenance and production facilities of Iranian armed forces. Thus, Babak facility most probably is the same site as the currently functioning Babak barracks [*padegan-e babak*].

In total, according to official data, in 1967-1980, 320 Soviet military personnel and staff of the Soviet Defence Ministry went to Iran in implementation of the government decisions and first of all the Regulation of the Council of Ministers No. 2249 of 17 October 1969 (Okorokov 2008).

Training. Iranian Imperial Government strived to to avoid sending its military personnel to the Soviet Union, so Soviet specialists trained Iranian military personnel inside Iran – in three cities where appropriate infrastructure existed, i.e., in Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz. Iranian authorities also did not accept Soviet establishment in Iran of the Office of the

Chief of Soviet Military Specialists Group [*apparat Starshego gruppy sovetskikh voennykh spetsialistov*] like it was common in other countries. Instead of this, a Commissar [*upolnomochennyi*] of the Main Engineering Directorate of the State Committee of the USSR on Foreign Economic Relations dealt with all the questions on Soviet military specialists presence in Iran. Still, this office was always held by army officers. The Soviet specialists subordinated to the Commissar concentrated mainly in two cities – Isfahan and Shiraz (Pochtarev 2003).

In 1955-79, the Soviet Union trained 315 Iranian military personnel. That is a high number for the country which never was politically aligned or even close to the USSR. It follows from the comparison with the countries much closer to the Soviet Union: in the same time span 3,710 Iraqi and 3,725 Afghan military personnel underwent Soviet training (National Foreign Assessment Center 1980). According to Soviet sources, there were even about 500 Iranian military personnel who were trained in the Soviet Union until September 1980 (Okorokov 2008). Their role in Iran's military development remains unclear, yet general Nader Jahanbani who served in the late 1970s as a deputy chief of the Imperial Iranian Air Force, had been educated, inter alia, in the late 1940s-early 1950s at the Soviet Air Force Academy, although there is contradictory information whether he had graduated, as he became involved in some espionage scandal.

Appendix 6. Russian-Iranian Trade in Commodities in the 2000s and 2010s, \$ m.

Year	Trade Turnover	Export	Import	Saldo
2002	807.9	757	50.9	706.1
2003	1,390	1,300	90	1,210
2004	2,014	1,911.7	102.3	1,809.4
2005	2,046.28	1,921.998	124.83	1,797.698
2006	2,144.5	1,904.7	239.8	1,664.9
2007	3,314.7	2,965.3	349.4	2,615.9
2008	3,690.3	3,288.6	401.7	2,886.9
2009	3,059.9	2,846.3	213.6	2,632.7
2010	3,651.1	3,379.7	271.5	3,108.2
2011	3 752.9	3 401.2	351.7	3,049.5
2012	2,330,7	1,902,2	428.5	1,473.7
2013	1,597,6	1,168,6	429.0	739.6
2014	1,682.5	1,300	300	1,000

Note: Compiled by the author from official data of the Federal Customs Service of Russia.

Appendix 7. Ukrainian-Iranian Trade in Commodities in the 2000s and 2010s, \$ m.

Year	Trade Turnover	Export	Import	Saldo
2002	172.185	165.08	7.105	157.96
2003	304.2	295.6	8.66	286.9
2004	443.841	434.537	9.304	425.23
2005	595.067	576.894	18.173	558.72
2006	345.2	318.3	26.9	291.4
2007	557.822	509.497	48.325	461.172
2008	930.908	859.231	71.676	787.555
2009	789.013	755.820	33.193	722.627
2010	1,080.656	1,030.74 5	49.911	980.834
2011	1,174.038	1,127.51 4	46.524	1,080.990
2012	1,237.033	1,169.81 2	67.221	1,102.591
2013	877.541	793.924	83.617	710.307
2014	755	703	52	651
2015	560	533	27	506

Note: Compiled by the author from official data of Derzhkomstat Ukrainy.

Appendix 8. Belarusian-Iranian Trade in Commodities in the 2000s and 2010s, \$ m.

Year	Trade Turnover	Export	Import	Saldo
2003	21,4	20,5	0,9	19,6
2004	36,7	33,3	3,4	29,9
2005	38,4	35,6	2,8	32,8
2006	35,6	31,7	3,9	27,8
2007	75,9	66,5	9,4	57,1
2008	93,8	83,6	10,2	73,4
2009	71,6	63,2	8,4	54,8
2010	104,8	97,2	7,6	89,6
2011	138,7	129,8	8,9	120,9
2012	120,6	111,5	9,1	102,4
2013	59	49.4 (46.2?)	9.6	39.8
2014	110	96.9	13 (9.8?)	84
2015	70.3	58.6	11.7	46.9

Note: Compiled by the author from official statistics published by the Belarusian Embassy to Tehran and the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. The figures in parentheses provide alternative data published in official documents.

Appendix 9. List of US Sanctions Imposed against Post-Soviet Entities and Private Persons for Defence-Related Cooperation with Iran Involving non-WMD Military Equipment and Technologies.

Sanctioned Entity	Date of Sanction Imposition	Current Status	Legal Basis¹⁸
1. Polyus Scientific Production Association	30.07.1998	Lifted on 17.11.2000	Executive Order 12938
2. MOSO Co.	30.07.1998	Lifted on 01.04.2004	Executive Order 12938
3. INOR Scientific Center	30.07.1998	Lifted on 17.11.2000	Executive Order 12938
4. Grafit (aka State Scientific Research Institute of Graphite or NIIGRAFIT)	30.07.1998	Lifted on 01.04.2004	Executive Order 12938
5. Glavkosmos	30.07.1998	Lifted on 10.03.2010	Executive Order 12938
6. Europalace 2000	30.07.1998	Lifted on 01.04.2004	Executive Order 12938
7. Baltic State Technical University	30.07.1998	Lifted on 04.02.2010	Executive Order 12938
8. Moscow Aviation Institute (MAI)	08.01.1999	Lifted on 21.05.2010	Executive Order 12938
9. D. Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology of Russia	08.01.1999	Lifted on 21.05.2010	Executive Order 12938
10. Volsk Mechanical Plant	29.03.1999	Procurement ban ended 2002, all other sanctions removed 01.04.2004	Sanctions for the Transfer of Lethal Military Equipment
11. TSNII Central Scientific Research Institute of Precision Machine Building (TSNIITochmash)	29.03.1999	Procurement ban ended 2002, all other sanctions removed 01.04.2004	Sanctions for the Transfer of Lethal Military Equipment
12. Tula Instrument Design Bureau	29.03.1999	Procurement ban ended 2002, all other sanctions remain	Sanctions for the Transfer of Lethal Military Equipment
13. Tula Design Bureau of Instrument Building	13.08.2002	Expired on 13.08.2003	Sanctions for the Transfer of Lethal Military Equipment
14. The State Scientific Production Enterprise Bazalt	13.08.2002	Expired on 13.08.2003	Sanctions for the Transfer of Lethal Military Equipment
15. Rostov Airframe Plant 168	13.08.2002	Expired on 13.08.2003	Sanctions for the Transfer of

¹⁸ INKSNA - Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act of 2000; INPA - Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000

			Lethal Military Equipment
16. Tula Design Bureau of Instrument Building	16.09.2003	Expired on 29.09.2004	Sanctions for the Transfer of Lethal Military Equipment
17. Vadim V. Vorobey (Russia)	01.04.2004	Expired on 01.04.2006	INPA
18. Belarus Belvneshpromservice	01.04.2004	Expired on 01.04.2006	INPA
19. Baranov Engine Building Association Overhaul Facility	01.04.2004	Expired on 01.04.2006	INPA
20. Federal Research and Production Complex Altay	22.07.2004	Expired on 18.11.2004	Missile Sanctions laws
21. Zaporizhzhya Regional Foreign Economic Association	23.09.2004	Expired on 23.09.2006	INPA
22. Khazra Trading	23.09.2004	Expired on 23.09.2006	INPA
23. Belarus Belvneshpromservice	23.09.2004	Expired on 23.09.2006	INPA
24. Federal Research and Production Complex - Altay	18.11.2004	Expired on 18.11.2006	Executive Order 12938
25. Sukhoy	28.07.2006	Expired on 21.11.2006	INPA
26. Rosoboronexport	28.07.2006	Expired on 28.07.2008	INPA
27. Tula Design Bureau of Instrument Building (KBP)	28.12.2006	Expired on 28.12.2008	Iran and Syria Nonproliferation Act
28. Rosoboronexport	28.12.2006	Expired on 28.12.2008	Iran and Syria Nonproliferation Act
29. Kolomna Design Bureau of Machine-Building (KBM)	28.12.2006	Expired on 28.12.2008	Iran and Syria Nonproliferation Act
30. Alexey Safonov (Russia)	28.12.2006	Expired on 28.12.2008	Iran and Syria Nonproliferation Act
31. Rosoboronexport (ROE)	23.10.2008	Expired on 21.05.2010	INKSNA
32. BelTechExport	14.07.2010	Expired on 14.07.2012	INKSNA
33. BelTechExport	23.05.2011	Expired on 23.05.2013	INKSNA
34. Belarusian Optical Mechanical Association	23.05.2011	Expired on 23.05.2013	INKSNA
35. Belvneshpromservice	20.12.2011	Expired on 20.12.2013	INKSNA
36. TM Services Ltd. (TMS), Belarus	05.02.2013	Expired on 05.02.2015	INKSNA
37. Scientific and Industrial Republic Unitary Enterprise [aka DB Radar]	05.02.2013	Expired on 05.02.2015	INKSNA

Belarus				
38.	Russian Aircraft Corporation (RAC) MiG	19.12.2014	Active	INKSNA
39.	JSC Mic NPO Mashinostroyenia (NPOM)	19.12.2014	Active	INKSNA
40.	Instrument Design Bureau (KBP) Tula	19.12.2014	Active	INKSNA
41.	Geroi Rossii	19.12.2014	Active	INKSNA
42.	Belvneshpromservice (BVPT)	19.12.2014	Active	INKSNA
43.	Russian Aircraft Corp. (RAC) MiG	28.08.2015	Active	INKSNA
44.	Rosoboronexport (ROE)	28.08.2015	Active	INKSNA
45.	JSC Mic NPO Mashinostroyenia (NPOM)	28.08.2015	Active	INKSNA
46.	Joint Stock Co. Katod	28.08.2015	Active	INKSNA
47.	Instrument Design Bureau (KBP) Tula	28.08.2015	Active	INKSNA

Note: Compiled by the author.