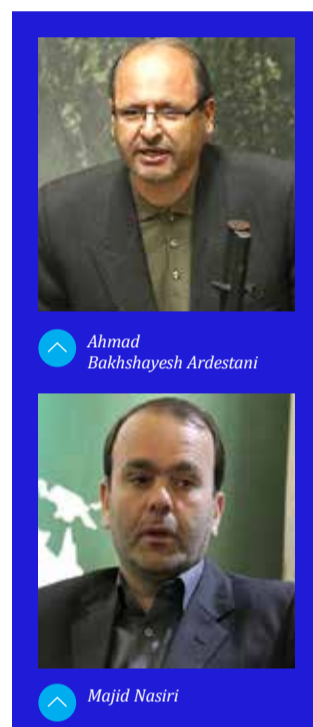


Prospect of Iran's long-term deals with West

Balancing ties with West, East is an imperative

International Desk
INTERVIEW

A "comprehensive strategic partnership" treaty between Iran and Russia was inked on Friday in Moscow, by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. The 20-year deal, which comprises an introduction and 47 articles, is a roadmap for developing bilateral relations. Iran has also sealed a 25-year agreement with China, formally known as the "Iran-China 25-Year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement," in March 2021. It encompasses a broad range of cooperation between the two countries, including economic, military, and security aspects. Following these extensive deals, there are now signs from government officials that similar agreements may be established with the West, a signal that is not well-received by hardliners who oppose any negotiations with the West. Two members of the Iranian Parliament assert that a long-term agreement between Iran and the West not only presents no issues but also addresses existing concerns. Majid Nasirpour says it is enough for the government to reach a conclusion on this matter; the problem of the hardliners is solvable. Ahmad Bakhshayesh Ardestani also speaks of the advantages of contracts with the West.



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The country needs global relations for further development, and part of these relations are with European countries. We have a long history with Europe, and we have always had exchanges in scientific and economic fields. Establishing and strengthening these ties can help the country achieve its plans.

Potential for similar deals with West

Ahmad Bakhshayesh Ardestani, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the parliament, evaluated the comprehensive strategic agreement between Iran and Russia and the possibility of similar agreements with the West: If the West adjusts its positions, why not? We can sign a 20-year agreement with them. Geopolitically and in terms of the balance of power, an agreement between Iran with Russia and China could be seen as a provocation by the West, considering Iran was under Western influence from approximately 1940 to 1979, and the West maintained an active presence in the region due to its strategic position. The Middle East is very important to the West. In the early days of the war between Gaza and Israel, the US said that if Israel did not exist, we would create it. This statement is made to ensure security stability for the Middle East and to facilitate the unhindered flow of oil to the West. Iran used to play this role for the US and the West, which is why they are attracted to such agreements.

The 20 and 25-year agreements that Iran signed with Russia and China could be provocative and tempting for the West, encouraging them to adjust their positions and enter into a 20-year agreement with Iran. There's no harm in that. Moreover, since the onset of the [Islamic] Revolution, we have engaged in various negotiations with Europe, encompassing constructive, critical, nuclear, and JCPOA-related discussions. The

issue is that Europe consistently looks to the US; if we establish relations with the US and negotiations commence, Europe will inevitably follow suit.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian raised this point because, apart from security and defense issues, Iran's agreements with China and Russia have not improved people's livelihoods, unlike the JCPOA, which led to a drop in the dollar rate and an easier life for people the very next day after its signing. European leaders visited Iran, although Iran did not allow the import of American Ford cars, and Trump stated that the JCPOA was not in the US' interest but in France's, as it was reviving Renault in Iran. On this basis, Pezeshkian says we are ready to negotiate with the West and sign a multi-year agreement. He makes these statements because if we don't look to the West and constantly focus on the East, the Russians and Chinese will impose whatever they want on us, as in the case of the three islands where they issued a statement saying that Iran and the UAE's issues should be resolved in the Hague Court, and we responded that we do not accept their sovereignty over Crimea. If Iran has relations with the West, a balance will be achieved, and it can work with the East with discretion. Therefore, if Iran works with Europe and the US, it will gain more benefits from Russia and China.

Impact of long-term agreements with East

The first effect of Iran's long-term agreements with Russia and China is creating an atmosphere, es-

pecially after Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria collapsed and he sought refuge in Russia, it was perceived that the discourse of Resistance [against the Israeli regime] had weakened, causing tremors and the impression among the people that Iran was isolated. However, when such an agreement is signed, it strengthens and solidifies the relationship, especially since both Iran and Russia are under sanctions. Regarding the market, the Iranian and Russian markets will open up to each other, facilitating the formation of commercial and financial agreements between the two countries. However, historical distrust between the Iranian people and Russia persists, which may impact these economic interactions. On the other hand, a 20-year agreement between Iran and Russia could serve as a roadmap or even be enticing for the West, which aimed to apply so much pressure on Iran that Tehran would eventually concede. However, when the West realizes that intensifying pressure on Iran leads to its pivot towards the East, these pressures will psychologically diminish. Concerning the impact on people's lives, we have yet to see BRICS or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization significantly affect daily life. Although Iran, under Ebrahim Raisi's government, managed to export approximately one and a half million barrels of oil, people's lives remain challenging and constrained, with no relief in sight.

Imperative of balancing ties with West and East

It doesn't seem that relations with Russia will have a signif-

icant impact on people's lives unless the country establishes a relationship with the West and balance this equation.

Ready for practical action with West

Majid Nasirpour, a member of the Independent Faction of the parliament evaluated the comprehensive strategic agreement between Iran and Russia and made proposals to the government for signing such agreements with Western countries: In my opinion, not only is the signing of such long-term agreements possible, but it is also a necessity. The country needs global relations for further development, and part of these relations are with European countries. We have a long history with Europe, and we have always had exchanges in scientific and economic fields. Establishing and strengthening these ties can help the country achieve its plans. Therefore, this is a serious matter, and the government should pursue it precisely. However, there are individuals who are extreme, create unnecessary confrontations, and engage in actions that have cost the country dearly over many years, such as the incident involving the Saudi embassy and its subsequent repercussions. [Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 following protests held outside the Saudi Embassy in Tehran. Some demonstrators, who were opposing the execution of prominent Shia Muslim cleric Nimr al-Nimr by the Saudi government, stormed and set fire to the Saudi Embassy in Tehran.]

It appears that the Islamic Republic, at this moment, is in a position where these statements (the necessity of ties with the

West) are made in full alignment, and if any action is taken, it will be in complete accord with the entire Establishment. Therefore, if the decision of the establishment and the general interests of the country require it, necessary measures must be taken to prevent unwarranted interventions by extremists in these areas. It seems that the country is planning to overcome the challenges ahead, and if the country's requirements and issues necessitate it, this decision will definitely be made and implemented.

Balance between West, East in int'l relations

Anyway, these kinds of relations can help create a balance between the East and the West and affect our interactions. Regardless of their mutual influence, Iran can secure the country's interests through both global poles by creating new literature in international relations. Naturally, in these interactions, the counterpart countries pursue their interests, and this path should be a win-win situation.

Iran has never had a problem with negotiations or even actions, as in 2013 when Hassan Rouhani became president, with the leadership's wisdom and permission, the government entered negotiations even at a higher level than the European Union. This shows that the country has never been closed to negotiations and is always ready. But these negotiations must also bear fruit, and if the negotiating countries show signs of securing the interests of the Islamic Republic, Iran is nat-

urally ready to negotiate and, more importantly, take practical action while safeguarding the interests of the Islamic Republic.

Balance between the West and the East in international relations

Nevertheless, such relationships can influence the creation of a balance between East and West and our interactions. However, regardless of the mutual effects they have on each other, Iran can secure the country's interests through both global poles by producing a new discourse in international relations. Naturally, in these interactions, the opposing countries pursue their own interests, and this path should ideally be a win-win situation.

Iran has never had an issue with negotiation or even taking action. For instance, in 2013, when Hassan Rouhani became president, with the guidance of the Leader [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei], the government engaged in negotiations even at a level higher than the European Union. This indicates that the country has never acted closed off to talks and is always ready. However, these negotiations must yield results, and if the negotiating countries signal their commitment to securing the interests of the Islamic Republic, Iran is naturally prepared to negotiate and, beyond that, ready to take practical action while preserving the interests of the Islamic Republic.

The article was first published by the Persian language Khabaronline news agency.