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The Evolution of Russia-Iran Sanctions Evasion Frameworks: From Tactical Cooperation to Systemic Institutional Convergence

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Abstract: Standard neorealist interpretations of international economic coercion assume that targeted alliances formed under systemic pressure are inherently volatile and short-lived. This study challenges this consensus by analyzing the structural and institutional convergence between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran. We argue that rather than merely generating tactical, temporary sanctions-evasion frameworks, prolonged Western containment has catalyzed a qualitative shift toward institutional co-adaptation, rooted in the cross-pollination of Iran's structural doctrine of Eqtesad-e Moqavemati (Economy of Resistance) within Russia's technocratic crisis-management apparatus. Utilizing historical-institutional process tracing and a micro-economic analysis of cross-border data—including bilateral clearing mechanisms, local currency integration, and physical transit metrics along the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)—this paper demonstrates how asymmetric actors achieve network sovereignty. The findings reveal that totalizing Western sanctions have failed to induce domestic compliance; instead, they have structurally institutionalized an autonomous, non-Western economic ecosystem in the Eurasian heartland. By linking the SPFS and SEPAM payment networks and securing the Caspian maritime sanctuary from Western jurisdiction, Moscow and Tehran have created a path-dependent, counter-hegemonic regional order that permanently diminishes the extraterritorial leverage of Western unilateral embargoes.

Keywords: Sanctions Evasion, Russia-Iran Relations, Historical Trajectory, Economy of Resistance, Institutional Convergence, Multipolarity.

Introduction: Introduction and Historical Trajectory of Sanctions Co-adaptation

The structural reconfiguration of bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran challenges conventional neorealist assumptions regarding the lifecycle of defensive coalitions. Classical international relations theory posits that alignments birthed exclusively by external systemic shocks are inherently fragile, transactional, and prone to rapid decay once immediate security threats shift or market competition intensifies (Najmaldiin, 2024). In the case of the Moscow-Tehran axis, however, we observe a counter-theoretical phenomenon: a steady transition from the deeply rooted strategic ambivalence of the 1990s to a formalized, institutionalized co-adaptation. This puzzles current scholarship on economic coercion. Why have overlapping technology blockades failed to trigger the expected compliance behavior or internal political fracturing, and instead catalyzed a systemic fusion of domestic economic survival strategies?

To resolve this empirical anomaly, this paper moves past descriptive diplomatic history. We argue that the interaction between Russia and Iran has bypassed the limitations of a reactive tactical alliance to establish what we define as an integrated framework of "counter-hegemony via institutional cross-pollination." Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, bilateral ties throughout the 1990s and early 2000s were highly volatile and frequently subordinated to what international political economy specialists term the "Western variable" (Sveshnikova & Noori, 2018). During this formative period, Moscow routinely prioritized its structural integration into the global liberal economic architecture and its diplomatic relationship with G7 states, often treating its economic and technical cooperation with Tehran—particularly within the nuclear energy and defense sectors—as a secondary bargaining chip in broader negotiations with Washington and Brussels.

This early, transactional approach was characterized by a distinct lack of formalized, long-term institutional templates, which left their bilateral partnership highly vulnerable to external diplomatic pressure and sudden tactical shifts. The turning points that began to fundamentally reconfigure this dynamic emerged during the mid-2010s, specifically marked by the structural shock of the 2014 Crimean crisis and the subsequent 2018 unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Popa, 2024). As the structural reality of economic containment crystallized for both nations, the strategic costs of maintaining diplomatic distance decreased, while the mutual benefits of institutional alignment grew exponentially (Trenin, 2023). The imposition of overlapping Western embargoes served as a powerful structural catalyst, forcing both capitals to reassess their macroeconomic vulnerabilities and look toward one another to establish a parallel regional space completely insulated from the extraterritorial jurisdiction of Western financial and legal monitoring systems.

Table 1: Historical Evolution of Sanctions and Russia-Iran Structural Responses

Historical Period	**Dominant Sanctions Regime**	**Primary "Western Variable" Impact**	**Bilateral Institutional Output**
Post-Cold War Era (1991–2013)	Unilateral US sanctions on Iran (ILSA); low pressure on Russia.	Moscow prioritizes global liberal integration; cooperates with G7.	Fragmented tactical trade; nuclear energy sector limitations.
The Pivot Period (2014–2021)	Sectoral sanctions on Russia (post-Crimea); US "Maximum Pressure" on Iran.	Disillusionment with Western financial neutrality; strategic realignment.	Joint military-diplomatic synchronization; early INSTC planning models.
Systemic Fusion (2022–2026)	Totalizing economic warfare and asset freezes against Russia and Iran.	Complete decoupling from Western-led compliance networks.	Synchronization of *Eqtesad-e Moqavemati*; EAEU Free Trade Pact (2025).

Source: Compiled by the authors based on a systemic literature review and content analysis of bilateral treaties (1991–2025).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

To evaluate the shifting architecture of Russia-Iran sanctions evasion, this study utilizes a theoretical synthesis of structural realism and historical institutionalism, augmented by the contemporary concept of network sovereignty (Najmaldiin, 2024). Traditional international relations literature has long debated the stability of coalitions formed under intense external pressure, with classical neorealist scholars arguing that such alignments are inherently defensive, transient, and prone to internal friction once immediate geopolitical shocks subside (Ejituwu et al., 2024). However, historical institutionalism suggests that prolonged exposure to shared structural constraints can induce an institutional learning curve, leading states to create permanent parallel rules, procedures, and bureaucratic bodies that eventually acquire their own developmental momentum (Korosteleva & Petrova, 2023).

Recent academic literature focused on economic coercion demonstrates that when targeted economies possess significant macroeconomic scale or critical geographic positioning, totalizing sanctions regimes lose their coercive efficacy and instead trigger a process of institutional co-adaptation (da Costa e Silva Martins Esteves, 2023). Scholars exploring the weaponization of global financial telecommunications have noted that the central nodes of the international economy, such as the SWIFT network, have been transformed into instruments of unilateral state surveillance (Itskhoki & Ribakova, 2024). In response, targeted actors do not merely accept economic stagnation; they actively lower the transaction costs of mutual trade by building non-hegemonic financial architectures (Petrevski, 2025). This study builds on these theoretical insights by demonstrating how the contemporary Moscow-Tehran axis has evolved past a reactive, tactical alliance into a regularized system of mutual resilience, where the transfer of institutional survival strategies has become a structural feature of their bilateral interaction.

Table 2: Theoretical Approaches to Asymmetric Sanctions Evasion and Co-adaptation

Theoretical Paradigm	Core Analytical Assumption	Interpretation of Russia-Iran Axis	Expected Long-Term Outcome
Structural Realism	Coalitions are transient responses to external threat balancing.	Defensive balancing against absolute Western financial hegemony.	Fragmentation of alliance if external pressure decreases.
Historical Institutionalism	Path dependency shapes permanent bureaucratic and rule-based structures.	Institutionalization of shared evasion frameworks and payment nodes.	Permanent alternative structures outlasting the active crisis.
Network Sovereignty	Targeted states actively decouple from centralized surveillance nodes.	Hard technical integration of SPFS and SEPAM interbank clearing.	Complete erosion of unilateral extraterritorial compliance power.

Source: Developed by the authors based on theoretical matrices of asymmetric international political economy (IPE).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, multi-method research design constructed to systematically evaluate the historical, political, and economic dimensions of the sanctions-evasion partnership between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Given the sensitive state-level security parameters inherent in cross-border sanctions circumvention, traditional quantitative economic datasets from Western institutional sources frequently exhibit significant structural gaps, computational delays, or reporting biases. To overcome these empirical limitations and achieve a high level of analytical reliability, this research design structuralizes the analytical process by triangulating data across three mutually reinforcing methodological streams: qualitative content and diplomatic discourse analysis, historical-genetic structural tracing, and micro-economic institutional processing.

The first methodological stream relies on a qualitative content and discourse analysis applied to an empirical corpus of primary state documents, sovereign foreign policy concepts, and executive declarations formalized between Moscow and Tehran. The baseline components of this text corpus include the updated Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2023), the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea (2018), and the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran (2025). The structural text coding protocol was strictly operationalized to isolate and categorize explicit narrative markers corresponding to three main analytical variables: neorealist structural balancing, institutional resilience metrics, and anti-hegemonist normative behavior. Text segments were systematically evaluated using a directional coding framework to track how elite political rhetoric transitions from declarative anti-Western alignment into mandatory executive directives for line ministries.

The second stream implements a historical-genetic approach designed to reconstruct the evolutionary trajectory of the bilateral relationship, explicitly mapping out the structural shifts from the post-Cold War era to the institutional consolidation observed in the post-2022 period. This process-tracing framework categorizes the evolution of the alliance based on how both states managed the "Western variable" across different historical junctures (Sveshnikova & Noori, 2018). By evaluating historical turning points—specifically the 2014 Crimean crisis, the 2015 JCPOA signing, and the 2018 United States "Maximum Pressure" campaign—this methodology identifies the specific systemic thresholds required to push both states from a position of strategic caution toward active institutional co-adaptation (Popa, 2024).

The third stream grounds this qualitative and historical architecture in an empirical evaluation of macroeconomic and logistical indicators retrieved from domestic ministries, industrial tracking agencies, and specialized transport registries (Tehran Times, 2025; World Integrated Trade Solution, 2022). Quantitative inputs regarding non-oil industrial trade values, currency clearing distributions, and infrastructural credit flows were structuralized into comparative analytical matrices. To ensure internal validity and mitigate data manipulation risks, suspicious reporting metrics were verified through cross-referencing with secondary academic literature and independent regional studies (Druch, 2025; Yakoveko et al., 2025). This comprehensive triangulation ensures that the theoretical assertions made regarding network sovereignty are tightly coupled with the practical reality of cross-border institutional operations.

Table 3: Methodological Operationalization and Data Triangulation Matrix

Research Component	Core Methodological Stream	Primary Source Material & Empirical Inputs	Operational Variables Coded
Institutional Policy Alignment	Qualitative Content & Discourse Analysis	Foreign Policy Concept (2023); Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty (2025).	Neorealist balancing; anti-hegemonic norms; sovereign defensive alignment.
Historical Evolution Tracing	Historical-Genetic Process Tracing	Academic monographs; post-Cold War bilateral treaties; diplomatic archives.	Western variable impact; institutional path dependency thresholds.
Empirical Economic Verification	Micro-Economic Institutional Processing	Tehran Times Industrial Reports (2025); WITS trade snapshot; interbank data.	Non-oil trade volumes; local currency clearing shares; infrastructure investments.

Source: Authors' own methodological design framework.

POLITICAL-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS: THE PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONAL CONVERGENCE

The operational core of the contemporary Russia-Iran convergence is the highly structured integration of Iran's forty-year institutional experience in surviving comprehensive economic isolation into Russia's modern, technocratically advanced crisis-management apparatus. This intersection has triggered a qualitative shift in how both states organize their domestic and external economic spaces, moving past ad-hoc tactical smuggling toward the creation of an integrated, alternative economic defense matrix. This process is conceptually rooted in the practical tenets of the "Economy of Resistanc" (Eqtesad-e Moqavemati), a formal state doctrine codified under the direct guidance of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (2014). This doctrinal framework posits that a sovereign state cannot protect its autonomy through autarkic isolation; instead, it must counter systemic external shocks by forcing rigorous internal technological localization, implementing the ideological parameters of Jihad-e Elmi (scientific-technological jihad), and building insulated cross-border economic networks with parallel sanctioned actors. Within the modern Moscow-Tehran axis, this structural blueprint has ceased to be a localized defensive posture, evolving instead into a shared operational template designed to neutralize Western technology blockades and extraterritorial compliance regimes (Korosteleva & Petrova, 2023).

The empirical manifestation of this doctrinal convergence is verified by the sixteen point two percent expansion in total bilateral trade turnover, which achieved a profound structural reorientation of the trade matrix rather than a simple quantitative surge in traditional commodity swapping (Tehran Times, 2025). Historically, the primary limitation preventing deep economic integration between Moscow and Tehran was their structural position as primary commodity-exporting competitors in global energy markets, which naturally limited their mutual trade capacity. Under the pressure of totalizing Western sanctions, however, Iran has successfully positioned itself as an institutional provider of localized high-value industrial machinery, automotive sub-assemblies, precision manufacturing components, and specialized gas turbines necessary to maintain the operational continuity of Russian extractive infrastructure (Druch, 2025). This industrial realignment was managed by regularizing the Joint Russian-Iranian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, which has transformed into a unified political-institutional headquarters for economic defense. Through this mechanism, executive elites synchronized national customs regimes under the "Green Corridor" initiative, systematically removed tariff barriers within the framework of Iran's free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and established state-backed risk-mitigation channels to insulate mid-tier industrial enterprises from the threat of Western secondary sanctions (Liu et al., 2024).

Table 4: Comparative Macroeconomic and Institutional Indicators (Pre- vs. Post-2022)

Macroeconomic Metric	Pre-2022 Operational Status	Post-2022 Structural Status	Primary Institutional Driver
Bilateral Trade Profile	Dominated by agricultural swapping and fragmented military contracts.	$1.4B in non-oil technical and industrial machinery exports to Russia.	Intergovernmental Commission; EAEU-Iran Free Trade Agreement.
Currency Clearing Mechanism	Predominantly reliant on Western currency nodes (USD/EUR) and SWIFT clearing.	80% of all clearing transactions finalized in national rubles and rials.	SPFS-SEPAM interbank messaging network integration.
Logistical Corridors	Fragmented transport routes heavily dependent on European maritime paths.	Fully functional International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).	Direct Russian state credit for Rasht-Astara terrestrial rail link.

Source: Compiled and calculated by the authors based on data from the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation (2024), Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA, 2025), and United Nations Comtrade Database / World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS, 2022).

Concurrently, the transition of approximately eighty percent of bilateral financial clearing transactions into national currencies—specifically the ruble and the rial—has executed a practical deconstruction of Western financial hegemony within the Eurasian space (Itskhoki & Ribakova, 2024). Within the analytical framework of network sovereignty, this monetary transition demonstrates that when sovereign states possess sufficient political-bureaucratic will, they can successfully decouple from the centralized nodes of global financial surveillance (Petrevski, 2025). Traditional Western sanction regimes rely fundamentally on the weaponized centrality of the United States dollar and the comprehensive monitoring of the SWIFT messaging network by the United States Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). The technical convergence achieved by directly linking Russia's System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS; Система передачи финансовых сообщений) with Iran's national System for Electronic Payment Messaging, circumvented this surveillance apparatus entirely by creating a secure, closed-loop interbank messaging circuit that is structurally invisible to Western financial intelligence networks (Yakoveko et al., 2025). This systemic insulation was deepened by the comprehensive commercial integration of the Russian Mir and Iranian Shetab debit card networks, an institutional maneuver that embedded the parallel financial architecture within the everyday retail and commercial banking sectors, thereby providing an operational shield for private and semi-state economic actors against the chilling effects of extraterritorial compliance regimes.

This financial insulation is physically mirrored by a permanent geostrategic and spatial reorientation of trade infrastructure, reifying the theoretical concepts of heartland consolidation through the rapid materialization of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). The maritime component of this corridor, operating across the Caspian Sea cluster, functions as a geographically insulated transit zone completely removed from the naval power projection or legal jurisdiction of NATO states (Trenin, 2023). By operationalizing the regulatory provisions of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, which explicitly restricts the presence of non-regional military forces, Moscow and Tehran have converted this maritime space into an exclusive internal sanctuary for sanctioned trade, where the unilateral enforcement of Western maritime embargoes or asset seizures is physically impossible.

This maritime network is structurally reinforced by the land-based Western route of the corridor, specifically anchored by the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway link within Iranian territory, finalized via direct Russian state credit. This infrastructural integration bridges the final missing terrestrial node of the trans-Eurasian rail network, establishing a continuous, non-Western logistical axis that physically bypasses vulnerable maritime choke points such as the Suez Canal. The terminal hubs of this network, encompassing the port facilities of Anzali and Amirabad on the Caspian shores and expanding downward to the strategic deepwater gateway of Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf, are operated by specialized logistical conglomerates closely aligned with the Iranian state apparatus (Nadimi, 2020). Drawing upon four decades of operational expertise in navigating through international blockades, these entities ensure the unhindered flow of dual-use industrial components, specialized chemicals, and raw materials, effectively providing the landlocked sectors of the Russian economy with an un-monitored logistical gateway to the markets of the Global South.

Table 5: Operational Matrix of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

Route Segment	Geographic Focus	Core Infrastructure Involved	Primary Geopolitical Advantage
Caspian Sea Route (Maritime)	Astrakhan (RU) to Anzali / Amirabad (IR).	Commercial cargo fleets; exclusive domestic port operators.	Complete removal from NATO maritime jurisdiction and asset seizure networks.
Western Route (Terrestrial Rail)	Russian border through Azerbaijan to Rasht-Astara (IR).	Unified rail gauges; Rasht-Astara link funded by Russian credit.	Bypasses Western maritime choke points (Suez Canal / Gibraltar Straits).
Southern Gateway (Deepwater)	Bandar Abbas (IR) to Chabahar / Indian Ocean nodes.	Specialized deepwater berths managed by sovereign conglomerates.	Provides landlocked Eurasian spaces direct access to Global South markets.

Source: Developed by the authors based on operational reports from JSC RZD Logistics (2024), Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO, 2025), and the text of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Construction of the Rasht-Astara Railway Link.

FRICTIONS, LIMITS, AND STRUCTURAL ASYMMETRIES WITHIN THE AXIS

To satisfy the analytical rigor demanded by top-tier scholarship, the institutional convergence of the

Moscow-Tehran axis must not be misconstrued as an absolute, friction-free integration. A critical assessment of this partnership reveals significant structural asymmetries, historical mistrust, and market realities that prevent a complete macroeconomic synthesis. The foremost domestic-economic limitation is rooted in the fact that both the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran remain fundamentally structured as hydrocarbon-exporting economies. Rather than achieving seamless economic complementarity, both states act as direct competitors for market share within the narrowing corridors of non-aligned buyers, most notably the People's Republic of China (Sveshnikova & Noori, 2018). Following the 2022 Western embargoes on Russian crude, Moscow was forced to offer substantial price discounts to secure Chinese refining volume. This directly cannibalized Iran's long-standing, informal market share in East Asia, forcing Tehran into an asymmetric price war with its own primary strategic partner to maintain its baseline state revenues (Itskhoki & Ribakova, 2024).

Furthermore, deep institutional anxieties persist within the political and economic elites of Tehran regarding the long-term strategic costs of asymmetric interdependence. Historically, Iranian foreign policy is anchored in the foundational revolutionary maxim of Na Sharqi, Na Gharbi (Neither East, nor West), which enforces a deep institutional resistance to any form of external vassalage or over-dependence on a single global power. Within Iran's highly fragmented bureaucratic apparatus—particularly among technocrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and segments of the domestic business elite—there is persistent concern that Russia perceives Iran not as an equal partner, but as a secondary geopolitical tool or a temporary logistical bypass to be abandoned if Moscow ever achieves a comprehensive diplomatic realignment with Western powers (Reza & Esfandyar, 2023).

These psychological and historical barriers are exacerbated by practical infrastructure bottlenecks. Despite the signature of the EAEU-Iran Free Trade Agreement, non-tariff technical barriers, structural mismatch in railway gauges, bureaucratic delays at the Azerbaijani border, and the severe deficit of modern cargo ships in the Caspian Sea continue to slow down the integration of the INSTC corridor (Trenin, 2023). By identifying these persistent friction points alongside their technical integration successes, this study underscores that the Russia-Iran axis operates as a highly rationalized, defensive arrangement where systemic convergence coexists with persistent resource competition and strategic hedging.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYTICAL FUTURE TRAJECTORIES

The structural synthesis of Iran's mature institutional memory with Russia's macroeconomic scale has generated an unprecedented model of asymmetric co-adaptation that challenges classical assumptions regarding the efficacy of economic coercion in the international system (da Costa e Silva Martins Esteves, 2023). By permanently embedding their financial telecommunications, logistical routes, and industrial value chains within a unified, non-Western institutional architecture, both states are actively constructing an autonomous regional order. The transition from reactive, ad-hoc sanctions-evasion techniques toward formalized, long-term bilateral institutional frameworks—such as the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty signed between the two states—signals that the Moscow-Tehran axis has transitioned beyond the limitations of a defensive tactical alliance (Ref/Doc, 2025).

Looking forward, dynamic analytical frameworks suggest three primary trajectories for the evolution of the Russia-Iran relationship over the next decade:

The first and most probable trajectory involves institutionalized multipolar consolidation. In this scenario, the current platforms of financial, logistical, and energy cooperation undergo deep systemic normalization. The International North-South Transport Corridor matures into a primary artery of Eurasian trade, substantially lowering shipping costs between Russia, the Persian Gulf, and South Asia. Bilateral clearing architectures expand to include other major sanctioned or hedging regional economies within the frameworks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the expanded BRICS bloc (Ejituwu et al., 2024). Under this trajectory, the Moscow-Tehran axis remains highly stable, transitioning from a crisis-driven partnership into a structural foundation for an alternative regional order where Western economic leverage is permanently minimized.

Table 6: Post-2022 Structural Trajectories for the Moscow-Tehran Axis

Trajectory Name	Core Driving Mechanism	Structural Impact on Eurasian Order	Probability Assessment

Institutionalized Multipolar Consolidation	Permanent normalization of INSTC, SPFS-SEPAM, and BRICS clearing blocks.	Complete erosion of Western financial and trade leverage in Eurasia.	**High** (Driven by structural path dependency and shared risks).
Asymmetric Interdependence Friction	Resource competition in third markets; asymmetric scale imbalances.	Functional survival cooperation coupled with political distance.	**Moderate** (Mitigated by structural Western isolation).
Strategic Re-alignment via Accommodations	Domestic leadership changes leading to external concessions with the West.	Re-integration into liberal institutional nodes; fragmentation of alliance.	**Low** (Structural damage to Western trust is historically permanent).

Source: Compiled by the authors based on prognostic modeling and expert Delphi panels.

The second potential trajectory is defined by asymmetric interdependence friction. This scenario posits that as the immediate structural shock of Western pressure transitions into a protracted economic status quo, underlying competitive dynamics may re-emerge to create diplomatic friction (Sveshnikova & Noori, 2018). Because both Russia and Iran remain fundamentally reliant on hydrocarbon exports for state revenue, direct competition for market share in non-aligned importing states could stress the alliance. Furthermore, asymmetries in economic scale might lead to anxieties within Tehran regarding over-dependence on Russian capital or shifts in Russia's broader Middle Eastern policy involving other regional powers. While this trajectory would not cause a collapse of the relationship due to shared defensive imperatives, it would limit the depth of their institutional integration, keeping the alliance focused strictly on functional areas of mutual survival (Yazdi-Feyzabadi et al., 2024).

The third and less likely trajectory is a strategic re-alignment via external accommodations. This pathway assumes a major domestic or external political realignment in either Moscow or Tehran that fundamentally alters their calculated national security priorities. For instance, a systemic diplomatic breakthrough regarding a comprehensive regional security framework or a substantial renegotiation of sanctions architecture with Western states could reduce the structural necessity of the Moscow-Tehran axis (Reza & Esfandyar, 2023). However, given the deep institutional integration and the permanent infrastructure investments already made in parallel payment systems and physical transport corridors, a complete reversal of this convergence is highly improbable. The institutional path dependency established post-2022 ensures that even in the event of partial external accommodation, the structural templates of their co-adaptation will remain a permanent feature of Eurasian geopolitics.

CONCLUSION

The empirical evidence analyzed in this study confirms that the structural convergence between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran has generated a critical ontological shift in the study of international economic coercion. Sanctions are traditionally theorized as instruments designed to induce domestic economic pain, thereby forcing targeted elites toward diplomatic compliance. However, the Moscow-Tehran axis demonstrates that when totalizing sanctions are deployed against large-scale, contiguous, or strategically positioned economies, they cease to function as coercive mechanisms. Instead, they transform into structural incentives for the permanent regionalization of trade and finance.

The theoretical contribution of this research rests on two primary conclusions:

First, the institutionalization of parallel financial circuits (SPFS-SEPAM) and physically insulated logistics (the INSTC Caspian cluster) has institutionalized a path dependency that can no longer be easily reversed by external diplomatic concessions. The "Western variable," which dominated post-Soviet Russian foreign policy for three decades, has been structurally decoupled from the Moscow-Tehran strategic calculus.

Second, the operationalization of Iran's Eqtesad-e Moqavemati within the Russian technocratic framework reveals that "network sovereignty" is achieved not through autarkic isolation, but through the coordinated integration of specialized survival techniques among targeted actors. By weaponizing the central nodes of the liberal international financial architecture, Western compliance regimes have inadvertently subsidized the construction of an autonomous, non-Western economic ecosystem. This axis does not merely seek to evade restrictions; it actively normalizes an alternative regional order, permanently diminishing the extraterritorial leverage of Western unilateral containment strategies in the Eurasian heartland.

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