

A COALITION OF THE SANCTIONED: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON RUSSIA AND IRAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

It was hardly a surprise that [Russian President Vladimir Putin chose Iran](#), another country at the receiving end of western sanctions, for his first visit outside the former Soviet sphere since [Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine](#). Russia and Iran, brought together by their opposition toward the West, already have a strategic partnership in place and have worked together in places such as Syria. But despite this cooperation, tensions have also existed where Russia has remained the big brother. But the war and the subsequent western sanctions on Russia have [added a new dimension to the partnership](#). Hours before Mr. Putin landed in Tehran, the countries signed a \$40 billion energy memorandum of understanding where Russia's Gazprom would work with the National Iranian Oil Company in developing energy fields and building LNG projects and pipelines. Last week, the U.S. had claimed that Russia was also seeking armed drones from Iran to deploy in Ukraine. So, Russia, battered by sanctions and rattled by the slow progress of its war, is seeking to build a coalition of the sanctioned by deepening an economic, defence and strategic partnership with Iran. And in Tehran, Mr. Putin has found a receptive audience.

In Tehran, Mr. Putin also met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoan to discuss the Syrian civil war and a United Nations proposal to allow grain exports from Ukrainian ports via the Black Sea. The trilateral summit, at a time when the West seeks to isolate and punish Mr. Putin, shows the complex geopolitical moves at play in West Asia. Turkey, a NATO member, has condemned the Russian war and supplied Ukraine with drones, but refused to join the western sanctions against Moscow. Turkey and Russia, which back rival factions in Syria's civil war but have entered into an entente, need each other to protect their interests in Syria. Iran, whose bet on the 2015 nuclear deal backfired after the U.S. unilaterally pulled itself out of the agreement in 2018, has been keen on building stronger strategic and economic ties with China and Russia. As the nuclear talks resumed by the Biden administration have reached an impasse, Iran's Ayatollahs would naturally prefer a stronger partnership with Russia. This explains the complex trilateral dynamics of the Tehran summit. The visit has also highlighted the importance of West Asia in the time of great power rivalries. Mr. Putin's visit came just days after U.S. President Joe Biden wrapped up his Saudi-Israel tour. Mr. Biden warned America's traditional allies against Russia, China and Iran gaining greater influence in the region. And days later, the Russian leader was in the Iranian capital. While Mr. Biden seeks to build a united front of American allies in West Asia against Iran and Russia, Mr. Putin is betting on Iran to expand the Russian influence in the region in these difficult times.

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