

# Iran, Turkey and Russia talks

August 10, 2022

## Manifest Pedagogy:

Russian President Vladimir Putin was in Iran on a trip intended to deepen ties with regional heavyweights as part of Moscow's challenge to the United States and Europe during its grinding campaign in Ukraine. The talks put the respective leaders in the spotlight, as the implications on regional stability, economic cooperation, food security and the war in Ukraine remain opaque.

**In News:** Russian President Vladimir Putin held meetings recently with the leaders of Iran and Turkey.

**Placing it in the Syllabus:** International Relations.

## **Static Dimensions**

- Significance of the talks

## **Current Dimensions**

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- Issues with the talks
- Implications for India

## Content

### More on News

- **Mr. Putin met Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan** on pressing issues facing the region, including the conflict in Syria and a U.N.-backed proposal to resume exports of Ukrainian grain to ease the global food crisis.
- Meeting in Tehran was part of the "**Astana Format**," a process through which the three actors have negotiated their interests in Syria.

- As the West heaps sanctions on Russia and the costly campaign drags on, Mr. Putin is seeking to bolster ties with Tehran, a fellow target of severe U.S. sanctions and a potential military and trade partner.
- Russian officials visited an airfield in central Iran to review Tehran's weapons-capable drones for possible use in Ukraine.

### **Significance of the talks**

- **Peaceful settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict**-The Tehran trip offers Russia a chance for a high-stakes meeting with Turkey, who has sought to broker talks on a peaceful settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as help negotiations to unblock Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.
- Turkey, a NATO member, has found itself opposite Russia in bloody conflicts in Syria and Libya.
  - It has even sold lethal drones that Ukrainian forces have used to attack Russian troops.
  - But Turkey hasn't imposed sanctions on the Kremlin, making it a sorely needed partner for Moscow.
  - Grappling with runaway inflation and a rapidly depreciating currency, Turkey also relies on the Russian market.
- **Symbolic meaning for Russia**-Tehran visit has symbolic meaning for Mr. Putin's domestic audience as well, showing off Russia's international clout even as it grows increasingly isolated and plunges deeper into confrontation with the West.
- **Russia- Iran**-Without sanctions relief in sight, Iran's tactical partnership with Russia has become one of survival. Iran is the centre of dynamic diplomacy, the meetings will develop economic cooperation, focus on security of the region and ensure food security. It will help expand cooperation on regional and

international issues.boosting ties in energy, transportation and trade.

- **Issue of Syria**-The focus of later trilateral talks among the presidents will be the decade-old conflict in Syria, where Iran and Russia have backed President Bashar Assad's government, while Turkey has supported armed opposition factions.
  - Russia intervened in the conflict in 2015, pooling efforts with Iranian forces and using its air power to shore up Assad's fledgling military.
  - Any sort of military attack in northern Syria will definitely harm Turkey, Syria and the entire region, and will benefit terrorists, hence there's the need to bring the issue to an end through talks.
  - Humanitarian issues in Syria have also come into focus since Russia used its veto power at the U.N. Security Council recently to restrict aid deliveries to **4.1 million people in Syria's rebel-held northwest** after six months, instead of a year.
- **Iran and Turkey** signed preliminary agreements covering investment, diplomacy, media and business, among other fields, and pledged to triple bilateral trade, to **\$30 billion**.
- **Food Supply**-U.N., Russian, Ukrainian and Turkish officials reached a tentative agreement on some aspects of a deal to ensure the export of **22 million tons of desperately needed grain** and other agricultural products trapped in Ukraine's Black Sea ports by the fighting
  - This meet could help clear remaining hurdles, a major step toward alleviating a food crisis that has sent prices of vital commodities like wheat and barley soaring.
- **Denting US Dollar**- The coalition has signed a memorandum & are ready to accept their payments in any prominent currency of the world.

- **A New Military Alliance:** Iran has emerged as a big military power though it was under continued threat for a US led invasion in the last few years. On the other hand, Russia is already an established military power in the world who is on the ante of the US.
  - Turkey is a NATO ally but its relations with the US are strained beyond critical limits. Hence if this alliance turns into a military alliance, they will be the biggest military power of the world with control over Asia & Europe.
- **Establishing a new Supply Chain system (INSTC):** Recently Russia proposed a new trans-shipment route through Astrakhan in Russia, passing through Caspian Sea, Iran & finally reaching a southern port in Iran can be the future of the world.
  - While the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is primarily aimed to target Asian markets, it can also perform vice versa to open up the avenues for India & other.

### Issues with the talks

- The **symbolism of this meeting is conspicuous** for three reasons.
  - First, this was Vladimir Putin's highest profile visit since Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24. Putin's aim in Tehran was to convey the message that Russia is not as isolated as the West portrays it to be.
  - Second, the talks came on the heels of US President Joe Biden's Middle East tour, where he tried to reassure traditional US partners about US security commitments to the region. further solidify the anti-Iran regional bloc and align on China and Russia.
  - Third, it coincided with Turkey's attempts to mend ties with UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Egypt, and

at a time when tensions between Ankara and Tehran relations are growing.

- Major issue that dominated the talks is how to establish a safe grain corridor from Ukraine. While the Turkish President is keen to push ahead, Russia wants the discussion to drag on so that Moscow can use it as leverage vis-a-vis different actors.
- The thorny issue of Turkish combat drone sales to Ukraine that have exacted a cost on Russian forces and have become a major irritant in ties between Russia and Turkey.
- If Iran does export drones to Moscow, its pro-Russian posture could be the nail in the coffin for the JCPOA and firmly tilt Iran toward Russia and China in the geopolitical realignments that are underway.
- Despite facing Russian energy competition from Russian oil on the market, Tehran is eager to cement the long-term cooperation agreements and can offer Moscow sanctions-busting and survival strategies that include using Iran as an export corridor which can affect Iran-Russia relations.

### **Implications for India**

- India for quite some time has been facing issues with the US. There have been several instances like threatening with CAATSA, use of threatening words by an American deputy NSA during his visit to India & several other cases of Arm-twisting by White House are examples of this.
- India already has Chabahar port of Iran on lease which can be a key factor in not only INSTC but also a major part of the future supply chain system to other parts of Asia & Europe.
- India can be a transit point for goods travelling between Russia/Iran to the rest of Asia & vice versa & can effectively counter Chinese influence by sending its

goods to Europe at a cheaper price.

So, it is a win-win situation for India but at the cost of straining the relations with the US.

### Way Forward

- If Russia concedes on the point of grain supply in spirit, it will not only spell good news for the question of food security in places like Africa, Asia and the Middle East, but will also boost Turkey's international stature.
- The trilateral talks were short on major breakthroughs, however, they achieved their aim of drawing attention to Russia's continued reach and influence within the multipolar politics in the Middle East.
- As Russia & Iran are the two biggest oil & gas producing nations yet were facing issues because of US backed sanctions. With the countries coming together, the routes of the Persian Gulf can be opened for Russia and Iran will have Russian technology to transfer petroleum products.
  - Together they can break the cartel of US backed oil producers in the region like Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, UAE & others.

### Mould your thoughts

1. Discuss how the recently held Iran, Turkey and Russia talks will affect the geo-political scenario of the world. Also highlight the implications of the talks for India (250 words).

### Approach to the answer.

- Brief intro about the talks
- Significance of the talks
- Issues with the talks
- Implications for India

- Wayforward and conclusion