

“PUTIN’S WAR AND THE MIDDLE EAST”
FOCUSING ON IRAN WITH SHAY KHATIRI
SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR
6 APRIL 2022



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SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BY SHAY KHATIRI

- Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has had massive ripple effects on the Middle East, affecting food supplies, the price of energy, geo-political relations and more.
- While focused mainly on the JCPOA, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has been effected by some headaches caused as a result of earlier Russian demands for sanction relief which the US was unwilling to take into account.
- These were centred around the view that the new sanctions imposed by the West should not affect Russia’s ties with Iran (on the grounds that some of those ties are related to the nuclear file).
- This situation had become more complex for the IRI given that in the absence of its own direct talks with the US, Russia had been acting as some sort of a mediator between them in the JCPOA talks.
- Nonetheless, the initial reaction of the IRI was to support Russia in the war against Ukraine.
- The Iranian Supreme Leader in fact blamed the US and NATO for having provoked a situation that ultimately made the invasion of Ukraine inevitable. However, that initial outcry has now been somewhat toned down.
- The IRI’s pro-Russian stance has been voiced despite the fact that Russia has always been a hated foreign player in Iran. This ‘traditional hatred’ of Russia (and similarly of Britain dubbed as the ‘Little Devil’) due to historical circumstances is not just limited to the general public but even some of the key elements close to the Deep State.
- Russia’s unpopularity in Iran has also been reflected in previous discussions that had taken place in the Islamic Parliament where Russia had been criticized for its previous actions in delaying the delivery of the S-300 missile system and for not acting correctly vis-à-vis its commitments with respect to the Bushehr nuclear power plant.
- The narrative being employed by IRI leaders in defending Putin and his atrocities in Ukraine has been to suggest that this what the US would do to us if it were not for the presence of the IRGC.

- Nonetheless, both now and before there have been public demonstrations outside the Russian Embassy with chants of 'Death to Putin'.

In response to a question by Mehrdad Khonsari asking "If key people in the Iranian regime were seeing Russia as obstructing the negotiations for a revived JCPOA, given that their main concern is getting access to the funds that will become available to them if an agreement is signed?", the speaker's responded by saying that in his view despite the fact that regime was now more dependent than ever before on Russia (and China with whom it had signed a 25-year Agreement) there were genuine concerns that Russia was not helping to draw these current negotiations to a successful conclusion.

However, in the view of the Speaker what the Iranians wanted more than the money being made available to them was to have access to nuclear weapons - something which they were intent on getting by cheating in its various arrangements with the 5+1 and the IAEA.

