

The Impact of Recognition Policy on Russia's Foreign Policy Discourse (Case Study: Middle East)

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Abstract

The struggle for recognition is one of the reasons of conflicts in world politics which affects the behavior of international actors. National culture and identity are very important in the process of shaping a country's foreign policy discourse. Basic philosophical beliefs about the self-image of the country, perceptions of friends and foes, and assumptions about the history and nature of international relations shape foreign policy ideas and concepts. Indeed, Actors' identity is formed through the recognition or non-recognition of 'others' and is constantly redefined by others. This article seeks to answer the question of what role identity politics and recognition policy play in Russia's foreign policy, especially in the Middle East. From this perspective, the escalation of tensions between Russia and the United States often involves the lack of recognition from the West for Russia's "great power" status and equal partnership in the international system. The main argument of the paper is that the discrepancy between the "great power" image and the Western image of Russia, along with the Russian aspiration to achieve great power status in the world order, has shaped the main narrative of Russia's foreign policy discourse.

From a historical perspective, Russia has sought to strengthen its position and security by using a variety of strategies as well as maximizing existing potentials and to enhance its capacity to play a major role in international politics. Since Russia's rise in international politics, it has considered itself as a major power in world politics. But this understanding of the 'self' and its position was not recognized by other international actors except for brief moments. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has sought to

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achieve the status of “great power” and to influence global equations by redefining its role and identity in international politics. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia went through a period of dramatic domestic political change and uncertainty in the foreign policy arena. A country that was once a superpower in a bipolar world began to doubt its place in the international system. This, coupled with frequent changes in the scope and orientations of foreign policy, apparently made Russia’s foreign policy unstable.

The relative improvement of Russian economic conditions, the US inactivity in global and regional policies alongside the aspiration of great power rooted in Russia’s national identity and history have provided the country with an opportunity to pursue a revisionist foreign policy. Vladimir Putin’s rise to power in 2000 led Russian politics to move into a completely different direction from the Yeltsin government and other Westernizers in Russia. Putin’s foreign policy doctrine, while emphasizing the status of great power, created a geopolitical discourse that contrasted Russia with the United States. Putin is the manifestation of the emergence of a new identity in Russia, an identity that is not purely Western or Eurasian, but a genuine identity based on Russia’s unique characteristics.

With the adoption of an aggressive foreign policy, especially in Ukraine and the Syrian crisis, Russia seeks to consolidate its position in the international system and fight against the US unilateralism in international crises. For the Russian elite, its status in the world order has equal or even greater value than security and economic concerns. Therefore, Russia is currently seeking to achieve equal status with the United States in the international system with an active and decisive presence in international and regional crises, emphasizing that without Moscow’s role it is impossible to come up with a solution to the international crisis. In this regard, one of the main goals of Russia’s military presence in the Syrian crisis is to affirm its position as a major world power.

This article suggests that using recognition policy alongside the constructivism theory will provide a better understanding of Russia’s efforts to promote its global position and make it easier to understand its foreign policy incentives. Accordingly, Russia’s identity and its aspirations for a position of great power have played an important role in shaping national interests and, consequently, in foreign policy, especially in Putin’s time. The main claim of the paper is that understanding Russia’s foreign policy with realistic approaches cannot be achieved. Therefore, in order to fill the existing vacuum, this study uses the politics of recognition in the framework of constructivism to analyze Russia’s foreign policy in the Middle East. The

findings of this paper indicate that the main purpose of Russian foreign policy discourse, along with maximizing power and wealth, is to identify and restore the position of great power in the international system. The Syrian crisis has provided Russia with an opportunity to consolidate its position in the emerging global and regional order after years of active and widespread presence in the Middle East in addition to countering US unilateralism. In this regard, the authors believe that the question of recognizing Russia's position in the international system by the West has played a major role in shaping its national interests.

Keywords: Constructivism, Foreign Policy, Middle East, Politics of Recognition, Russia.

China's Orientation toward the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Light of its New Foreign Policy (from 2013 to 2018)

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Abstract

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Beijing, while attempting to resolve border issues with the newly independent states of Central Asia, was seeking to confront the security issues of separatism, extremism, and terrorism, which during this period were the major challenges to Beijing. Therefore, the main foundation of China's approach to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was security-related issues, particularly the ones in the Xinjiang province, as the danger of the spillover of extremism from Central-Asian countries could pose a serious internal challenge. However, China's economic slowdown in recent years, and some developments in the international system, such as the American effort to focus on the Asia-Pacific region, has compelled Xi Jinping to pursue a new foreign policy.

As Xi Jinping came into power, he adopted an active foreign policy that some analysts describe it as a marked departure from the 'low profile' foreign policy of China. This new approach has some pillars such as the establishment of new multilateral institutions, more active participation in peripheral regions, the marching (geographical) west strategy, and new economic and financial initiatives.

This new foreign policy has rooted in two important factors. On the one hand, China does not want to be under the U.S. pressure in its peripheral region, and on the other hand, it has put forward new initiatives to keep its growth going. Examples of these initiatives include the "Asian Investment Bank" and "One Belt One Road". These new ideas and initiatives have caused some changes in China's approach toward the Central Asian region, as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a significant multilateral platform.

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Question

In the light of the new principles and guidelines in China's foreign policy, implying a more active approach, this question has been raised: what changes have been made to China's orientation towards the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?

Hypothesis

As a result of China's new foreign policy (an active foreign policy), the strengthening of the economic dimension of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has become a central agenda in Chinese foreign policy decision making.

Methodology

The present study examined the documentary approach and analytical descriptive method to better understand the issue of China's new foreign policy (from 2013 until 2018) and the country's orientation toward the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Conclusion

The effort to reduce the tensions with Central Asian countries, reducing risks of extremism, terrorism, and separatism; and meeting energy needs were China's main reasons for establishing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. But, as China's growth has increased, China's expectations of the organization have changed.

The "Marching West" "Strategy of China and the new economic initiatives, such as "One Belt One Road", has made Central Asia a more important region for China than in the past. This has led to some changes in China's approach toward the SCO. First, China seeks the strengthening of the economic dimension of the organization more than ever, and it seems to be continuing in the future; so, Beijing sees the SCO as a platform for promoting new economic initiatives. Secondly, while in the past, Beijing's most important security concern was to maintain the stability of Xinjiang province, now as the result of China's quest for increased economic presence, maintaining the security of its investment and infrastructures has become China's priority. Also, due to the desire of the United States to reduce its presence in the region (Central Asia) the organization can supply public goods that were previously provided by the United States. Third, China-Russia relations have become more competitive in the organization. For example, although Russia has been seeking closer proximity to China since the Ukraine crisis, it has also sought to strengthen the security

dimension of the Organization. At the same time, China seeks to strengthen the economic dimension of the organization, especially due to new economic initiatives. It should also be noted that the new foreign policy of China, which seeks to link with the West through economic corridors, has made Iran's geopolitical position more important. So in recent years, Chinese Decision-makers have voiced their support for Iran's permanent membership in the SCO. Of course, the nuclear deal that abolished the UN sanctions eased this orientation.

Keywords: China, Economy, Iran, Russia, SCO, Security.

Maintaining the Sphere of Influence: An Explanation of Russia's Foreign Policy on Syria Crisis

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Abstract

This paper aims to explain Russia's motives for its engagement in the Syrian crisis. The question is as to why Russia intervened in the Syrian crisis in favor of the Syrian government. The hypothesis is that the prospect of losing sphere of influence in the Middle East prompted Russia to intervene in the Syrian crisis backing the Syrian government. Regarding theoretical framework, Geopolitical territoriality has been used as the conceptual framework to address the abovementioned question. Since 1991, developments in geopolitical areas, particularly in the Middle East, have been to a certain point to Russia's detriment since allies and friends have fallen one after another in the Middle East; Saddam Hussein was ousted in 2003. Shortly afterward, the implementation of the Greater Middle East Plan jeopardized the position of authoritarian rulers. The Arab uprisings also exacerbated this trend. Henceforth, Russia's sphere of influence diminished significantly. During the Arab uprisings, Muammar Gaddafi's government was overthrown in Libya, and Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria was teetering on the brink of collapse. Syria, being part of the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union since its inception, is Russia's last stronghold in the Middle East. Russia's leaders have believed that with the fall of authoritarians in the Middle East, being mostly Russian friends, either pro-Western governments or extremists will come to power, both of which will thwart Russia's interests in the region. If Bashar al-Assad's government had collapsed, Russia would have been reduced to a marginal power in the Middle East. Accordingly, Russia intervened in the Syrian conflict in order to preserve its sphere of influence in the Middle East.

The Syrian crisis has turned Syria into a battlefield on which the regional and global power rivalries have been fought. Russia is one of the most

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important and influential extra-regional powers. At the outset of the crisis, Russian officials' positions were close to that of Western and Arab countries. To the extent that they threatened Bashar-al-Asad with a harsh reply in the case he did not accept the reforms; however, shortly thereafter Russia's approach changed. The first step of this shift of Russia's approach to the Syrian crisis was its veto on the UN Security Council draft resolution presented by Western countries. Having been passed, international pressure on the Syria government would have been augmented significantly. Moreover, Russian officials played a positive role in the inter-Syrian talks of national reconciliation, seeking to bring closer the positions of opposing factions. Equally, Moscow in coordination with Iran and China put forward much needed economic assistance to the Syrian government, preventing its imminent collapse. Nevertheless, the most important dimension of Russia's involvement in the Syrian crisis has been direct military interventions and aerial bombardment against opposition and extremist-held areas. Consequently, Russia's air operations that had started in mid-September 2015 changed the balance of power in the battleground in favor of the Syrian army which succeeded in retaking areas previously held by oppositions and extremists.

The paper aims to answer the following question: why did Russia intervene in the Syrian crisis? The main research hypothesis posits that prospect of losing sphere of influence in the Middle East prompted Moscow to intervene in the Syrian crisis in support of the Syrian government. An analytical method has been used to investigate the research question.

Keywords: Geopolitical Sphere of Influence, Russia, Rivalry with America, Syrian Civil War, Tartus.

The Effect of Geopolitical Conflict between China and Russia on Reviving Russia's Western Identity

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Abstract

The status of Russia has always been dual in terms of geography and culture, that is, it is sometimes called Asian and sometimes European. China and Russia have had ups and downs in their bilateral relations; both countries have fought several wars with each other the 19th century, in all of which China was defeated. With the happening of the Communist Revolution in China in 1949, relations between the two communist powers improved. Over the time, however, they became each other's enemies once again in a manner that 20 years after China's revolution in 1969 the two entered territorial battles with each other. During those years and in response to growing threats from the Soviet Union, China revised its relationship with the US and managed to open its doors towards the West in economic and political aspects. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, China and Russia saw the promotion of cooperation in their relations. But their interactions with each other have not been in a way to include strategic dimensions and turn into an alliance against the West. For example, both countries were involved in the founding of the Shanghai Pact, one of whose aims was to counteract Western influence or that both countries have significant military exchanges. In the economic field too, they have increased their level of cooperation, with Russia being China's main energy supplier. In many cases, both countries also share common positions against the West. Under such circumstances, it is to be seen how Russia will face the increasing growth of Chinese power. The importance of examining the relations between these two governments is since both of them are among the powers in the international system. The main question in this study is how the Russian reaction would be in the event of a dispute with China. The hypothesis to justify the abovementioned

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question is that Russia has major disagreements with China in the region of the Far East and Central Asia, and as a result of these emerging differences, Russia, due to its inability to defend its extensive borders, will have to compromise with a low priority threat, i.e., the West. For a better and more tangible understanding of the hypothesis, we follow the reactions of both countries in relatively similar historical situations to better grasp the likelihood of a Russian reaction. Theoretical explanation of this issue is made within the framework of the balance of threat theory and based on which it is concluded that Russia eventually re-conquers Westernism itself, not specifically as the tactical and temporary co-operation with the West, but a strategic and sustainable alliance with it.

Conclusion

Russia is a country that has always felt insecure because of the geopolitical situation that the country has been located in. It has a vast territory and for this reason it cannot easily defend its long borders against foreign attacks. This geographic challenge is exacerbated for Russia when the country's population is also declining. Russian history shows that one of the most vulnerable situations in which the country could fall into is when Russia has to fight military clashes on both the eastern and western fronts simultaneously. Under such circumstances, Russia has always had to approach the side that it considered to be less threatening. In such a two-front-battle scenario, a confrontation between China and Russia could pave the way for Russia to incline towards the West. According to the theory of the balance of threat, such a conflict may not be due solely to a shift in the distribution of world power in favor of China, but rather to other factors, including geographical proximity and aggressive intentions that play important roles here. Imagine, for example, that China is present in Latin America or Africa. In such a case, its growing power could not have been considered a threat to Russia.

The top priority of Russian foreign policy has been its border regions as well as its periphery, which is what could make China a potential threat to Russia. Shifting the distribution of power in favor of China, rather than playing a role in threatening Russia, could affect on Russia's and the West's convergence with China because since then and unlike the 1990s, the West cannot ignore the power of Russia now. Therefore, the confrontation between Russia and China forces Russia to answer the question of whether it is a European country or rather an Asian one. As mentioned, Russia's need for the West is not only to reduce pressure on its western borders to focus on its eastern borders, but also for increasing the population of its eastern

regions to curb Chinese influence on a variety of fields such as technology, capital, or even European immigrants needs. Russia can no longer create opportunity for itself by playing the parties involved and has to incline towards the West. Russia's inclination towards the West can be either due to the persistent threat posed by China, or it may be due to the Russian people's changing identity towards Europeanization. Although the first factor seems to be sufficient for Russia to reconsider its relations with the West, if this issue is to be accompanied by changing Russia's mindset towards the West, not only will it pave the way towards the West, it will also make relations between Russia and the West stronger and more stable.

Keywords: Central Asia, Far East, Geopolitical Conflict with China, Strategic Alliance, Western Identity.

Study of the Economic Development Status of Afghanistan in the Age of Democracy (2001-2017)

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Abstract

After the fall of the Taliban and the establishment of a democratic power structure in Afghanistan, the country was expected to witness an economic development in the light of political development. This article examines the state of Afghanistan's economic development during the era of democracy. To this end, while examining the developments in the establishment of democracy and macroeconomic development programs in Afghanistan, theoretical approaches to the relationship between democracy and development as well as statistical analysis of economic development indicators have been used. This paper attempts to answer the question of whether political development and democratization brings about political development while assessing the state of Afghanistan's economic development in the process of political and democratic transformation. Our study shows that the indicators of economic development have not changed significantly from 2001 to 2017. These findings suggest that during democratization, Afghanistan came to terms with economic problems by addressing the economic growth rather than the economic development issue. While quantitative indicators such as Gross Domestic Product and urbanization rate have seen improvement, qualitative indicators of development such as poverty alleviation, per capita income growth and equitable distribution of wealth, human development, and industrialization have not grown as much. Therefore, given the vast amount of international community support, efforts to establish democracy in Afghanistan have not led to an improvement in qualitative indicators of development as expected. In fact, in the post-Taliban era, government achievements were mainly concerned with political democracy rather than with economic development. Democracy in Afghanistan, being associated rather with insecurity, corruption, financial mishandling, electoral fraud, rentier economy, and the

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escalation of urban and rural disparity, has had an incompatible relationship with economic development.

Democracy is considered the most important and crucial political evolution in Afghan modern history. The context of Post-Taliban Afghan politics and geography was able to connect to the new world order through the establishment of democracy. Democracy entailed many commitments of the West towards this country. Therefore, Democracy as the first and foremost international treaty on the political history of government formation in Afghanistan and its link to the modern world order is considered in the aspects of good governance, security and economic development. In reality, this political model (democracy) is considered as the only version of development in the Post-Taliban era. For this reason, some scholars believe that democracy has been considered an exogenous phenomenon in Afghanistan. This development is seen as the best opportunity for the Afghan elites in terms of regional and global consensus on democracy to solve the biggest political problem of post-Taliban Afghanistan. As mentioned, at the national and global levels, important features and objectives of democracy in Afghanistan were defined, including security, civil liberties, political participation, and economic development. Seventeen years after the outset of the democratization process in Afghanistan, it is seen as an opportune time to examine the status of these expectations.

The applied study of the political economy of democracy in Afghanistan is a good measure of the contribution of political development (with emphasis on democracy) to economic development. Indeed, many studies have been conducted in various countries to assess the relationship between democracy and economic development and its application, but none of them has examined Afghanistan. This article investigates Afghanistan's economic development situation in the era of democratization. For this purpose, theoretical approaches to the relationship between democracy and development and the statistical analysis of economic development indicators have been used.

Most scholars have focused on the socio-political issues of democracy in Afghanistan and have paid little attention to the relationship between democracy and economic development as the central axis. Although some scholars have considered and accepted democracy as the only solution to the establishment of a political system in Afghanistan, they still have a skeptical approach to its consolidation and concrete achievements, especially in the economic field; this point has been emphasized in this research.

The research question focuses on the status of Afghanistan in terms of economic development during the period of democracy and the question is as follows: In the process of democratization (from 2001 to 2017), what evolutions have the economic development of Afghanistan experienced? To answer this question, a quantitative and correlation method has been used.

Based on our study, Afghanistan has already witnessed two periods of development: the first period/decade (2001-2011) and the second period/decade (from 2014 onwards). In these years, security and political sectors of democracy (freedom and public participation) took precedence over its economic sector. Indeed, political development has accelerated much more than economic development. The process of economic development in Afghanistan, especially massive plans of development such as the National Solidarity Program (NSP) and the National Development Strategy (NDS) are backed by external support under the direction of transnational institutions. The exogenous component of economic plans has hurt the process of economic development of Afghanistan, as much as the international aid has been spent by the central government and economic planners in Kabul, which has contributed to the financial corruption. On the other hand, the fate of Afghanistan's development and democracy has been fettered by foreign rents.

Democracy has exacerbated five already known crises: electoral fraud, corruption, rent economy, insecurity, and fundamentalism in Afghanistan. Each of them has harmed the economic development process. The insecurity that has been the cause of Afghanistan's underdevelopment so far is the most controversial within the context of democracy. In recent years, it has failed to bring security given the inability to incorporate the Taliban into the political structure or to legitimize the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in the eyes of people of Afghanistan.

In recent years, Afghanistan has fared better in the quantitative indicators of development than qualitative ones. Unequal distribution of wealth has also exacerbated the severity of social inequality in Afghanistan, including urban-rural and social class divide (increasing the proportion of the poor). Accordingly, Afghanistan has been on the path of growth rather than development. Our study shows that the economic development indicators in these years have not changed significantly. Also, the national economy has experienced economic growth while falling short of economic development. In this country, quantitative indicators such as the growth of Gross domestic product (GDP) and urbanization rate have improved. But, qualitative indicators such as poverty, per capita income, and equal distribution of wealth, human development, and industrialization have significantly been

compromised. Therefore, democracy and political development in Afghanistan have not yet resulted in economic development. In effect, economic growth should be considered a positive sign of development since economic growth is the first medium of economic development. However, this optimism is acceptable as far as it leads in the long run to the development of Afghanistan.

The relationship between democracy and economic development in recent years cannot be regarded as a wholly contradictory or compatible one. Democracy has been coupled with the unequal distribution of wealth and the abovementioned five crises. What makes these two variables mutually connected and consistent is the efficiency and strengthening of the state institution and the bureaucratic system, free from the controversies arising from the form of the political system. Therefore, the institutional model would be more appropriate and pertinent in explaining the problems of economic development in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Democracy, Economic Development, Growth, Political Economy.

Introduction to the Science and Technology Diplomacy of America in Central Asia

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Abstract

The adventurous nature of US foreign policy under George W. Bush and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq have inflicted grave damage on the US international standing, especially in the Islamic world. Accordingly, to deal with the situation, the Americans have used various political, economic, and socio-cultural means to restore US international standing, particularly in the Islamic world. One of such tool has been the use of the capacity of science and technology diplomacy. In this regard, special attention was given to the appointment of science envoys from the United States to different parts of the world. Furthermore, Muslim-majority countries were the main focus of US scientific missions. Scientific delegations have played a compelling role in collaboration and communication between the two sides. Efforts to solve the existing problems of the Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries through scientific cooperation set the stage to make use of science and technology capacities in the abovementioned model of American diplomacy. This article attempts to answer the following question: What are the most important priorities and institutions shaping American science and technology diplomacy in Central Asia? Most of the science and technology cooperation between the United States and Central Asia seems to be focused on weapons of mass destruction, water and education. The most important institutions involved in the aforementioned issues have been the government-affiliated, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture, while the private sector has had a limited role to play in this. In regards to methodology, the research method of this paper is a descriptive-analytical one, using the second-hand data.

The Soviet record and its emphasis on science and technology to advance its plans in Central Asia cannot be ignored. Central Asia at the time had a

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significant level of science and technology capacity; therefore, these countries today enjoy a high level of science and technology infrastructure deemed necessary for economic development. However, such infrastructure is mainly operated at government expense and due to several factors such as low funding, lack of innovation in their use, and the inefficiency of the education system in training scientists and engineers, it has not been effective. However, engineers and specialists at the community level are of great importance. Also, all Central Asian societies believe that the solution to their problems is a scientific and technical one. Recognizing the importance of this issue, the US government is using science and technology capabilities to advance its foreign policy goals around the world, including Central Asia. To accomplish this goal, various plans have been put in place in the post-Soviet region. This raises the question of what the key areas of interest are in US science and technology diplomacy in Central Asia, and which private and public institutions are involved.

The research hypothesis is that much of the science and technology cooperation between the United States of America and Central Asian countries appear to be focused on the discussion of weapons of mass destruction, i.e. WMD, water, and education. The most important institutions involved are mainly government-affiliated, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Agriculture, while the private sector has a limited role to play. Results show that the adventurous nature of US foreign policy under George W. Bush and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq have damaged the US international image and reputation, especially in the Muslim world. To counter this, Americans have used various political, economic, and socio-cultural tools to improve the international image of the United States, especially in the Muslim world. One of such tools has been the use of science and technology diplomacy. In this regard, the US appointment of science envoys to various parts of the world has received special attention. The main focus was to send faculty members to Muslim-majority countries. Trying to solve the problems of the countries of the Middle East and Central Asia through scientific cooperation was one of the main areas of utilization of science and technology capacities in the abovementioned US diplomacy. The science envoys provided an encouraging role in cooperating and communicating between the parties. At that time, much of the science and technology cooperation between the United States of America and Central Asia focused on the discussion of WMD, water and education. At the government level, five ministries are currently operating in Central Asia: the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Energy, the National Science Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs; other lower-level agencies include the Environmental Protection Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture and at the lowest level the US Geological Survey is placed. Several government agencies have been defined in the field of science and technology, though they are not active as of today such as the Ministry of Transport.

In addition to the ministries listed above, the National Science Foundation has a dedicated international cooperation program within the framework of the International Bureau of Science and Engineering in which Islamic countries participate. The Foundation's activities include scholarships, travel grants, summer institutes, workshops and research projects. The US Agency for International Development has sent technology consultants around the world. Catherine Hammes has been sent to Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2013 to further her goals.

The Agency's regional headquarters in Central Asia comprises four countries: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The International Development Organization's water strategy is divided into three parts: local-based water management organization programs, a local research program, and the development of regional water policy in collaboration with other parties involved. To enhance the technical and professional capacity in this regard, the US Agency for International Development is working directly with academic and government researchers on the ground.

Meanwhile, American companies and organizations have recognized the growing importance of working closely with local science and technology communities. They have a positive view of the science and technology infrastructures in countries. American science and technology institutions and corporations view Central Asia as a profitable destination for business. As a result, Microsoft, Cisco, IBM, and other entities are keen to accelerate their work in Kazakhstan. American Design Company Adrienne Smith + Gordon Gill also won the International Competition for Atomic Design at the 2017 International Exhibition on Energy Future. These bilateral programs include spending \$10 million on the behalf of the United States along with the participation of thousands of Central Asian experts. Some have been used to prevent the spread of nuclear and biological materials. In addition, US consultancy programs include support for energy cooperation, health, water management, and environmental protection. It should be noted that America's scientific and technological achievements are highly respected in Central Asia, and American universities are the first choice of many students traveling abroad for science and technology education. It should be noted, however, that American organizations have little interest in strengthening the capabilities of Central Asian science and technology,

particularly in cases involving military implications. Thousands of Kazakhstani students were sent abroad annually under the Bolakash program, which was announced by Kazakhstan's president in 1994. Within the framework of the Full Bright program since 2000, many American students have been studying in Kazakhstan. Besides, many Kazakh students are provided with a full scholarship, covering the living expenses, at American and European top universities and are required to return to Kazakhstan within five years. According to Kazakh officials, there are currently 815 students, who are granted a full scholarship, at 42 US universities, enrolled in undergraduate (42%), master (26%), and PhD. (1%) programs. However, the major focus of US science and technology in Central Asia is on nuclear energy.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Nuclear Cooperation, Science, Science Foundation, Technology.

The Motives of Iranian-Russian Security Cooperation in Central Asia

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Abstract

The present article seeks to analyze the security policy of Iran and Russia in the Central Asian region and to establish their respective motivations for cooperation in the region. This article attempts to answer the key question of what constitutes the most important factor in encouraging Iran-Russia cooperation in the Central Asia post 9/11. The hypothesis of the article posits that the common threats arising from the international system level or related to it are the most important motivations for Iran-Russia cooperation in the Central Asia. Accordingly, although regional and domestic factors also play a role in the cooperation of the two countries in the region, the most important relevant level of analysis is the international level. Iran and Russia do not tolerate US activities in Central Asia and are concerned about US presence and activities in the region since Iran and Russia see the expanding of the US security umbrella in Central Asia post 9/11 under the pretext of fighting terrorism at the detriment of their interests in the region. Using a neo-realistic perspective, this paper shows that in parallel with the increasing American desire to be active in Central Asia post 9/11, along with factors such as operations against the spread of terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, Iran's and Russia's motivations to counter US influence in the region have been stepped up. In this paper, a descriptive-analytical method has been used to collect data from library and documentary sources. To systematize the research findings, a neo-realist theoretical framework has been adopted.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asia faced two domestic and regional geopolitical developments. Besides political, ethnic, identity, and border issues inherited from the Soviet era, the Central Asian countries faced with geopolitical problems. Another development was the post-Cold War atmosphere that created new geopolitical realities in the region. These

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developments, on the one hand, created a power vacuum in the region due to the prevailing conditions in Russia. Furthermore, it set the stage for regional and extra-regional power competition. In these new conditions, the United States sought to infiltrate Central Asia to complete its Eurasian rings. In contrast, Russia, which regarded Central Asia as part of its security environment, sought to prevent the American influence in the region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian region, with its unique security features, has become a common security environment for Iran and Russia, and any threat to the security and stability of the region is a matter of concern for both Iran and Russia.

This article seeks to answer the key question of what constitutes the most important factor which encourages Iran-Russia cooperation in Central Asia post 9/11. The main hypothesis of the article is that the common threats arising from the international system and the relevant international level are the most important motivations for Iran-Russia cooperation in Central Asia. Accordingly, while regional and domestic factors playing a role in the cooperation of the two countries, the most important level of analysis is the international level. In this paper, a descriptive-analytical method has been used to collect data from library and documentary sources and the analysis has been carried out within the chosen theoretical framework. To systematize the research findings, a realist theoretical framework has been adopted.

Waltz believes that the international system plays a decisive role in defining and shaping the state's foreign behavior. Therefore, any change in the international system would alter state behavior in the international arena. Arguing that state foreign policies are hugely influenced by their position in the international system, Waltz refers to the US behavior in the post-Cold War period as a clear example of this trend. He argues that the reaction of the great powers to the US provides evidence that the states usually try to balance the superpower.

The orientation of the US policy in Central Asia before 9/11 has shown that it had no vital interests in the region and was essentially seeking secondary interests which included minor military cooperation or integration of the regional countries in second-rate security structures such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Nonetheless, since 9/11, the United States has had specific security and military policy and a strong and active presence in the region. In this regard, the US troops' deployment in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan indicates that it does not want to leave the region. The geopolitical significance of the region has also taken prominence in US policy and strategy post 9/11, especially after the US-led

invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Overall, the containment and isolation of Iran, the prevention of Russia's excessive influence in Central Asia, attempts to provide a model for regional countries and military-security goals are among the main pillars defining the American interests in Central Asia.

Therefore, based on a sense of common threat, Iran and Russia have established close ties to counter the growing US influence in the region. Accordingly, one of the most important goals of Iran-Russia security cooperation in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea is to oppose the policies pursued by the US and its regional allies. Some experts even believe that Iran-Russia military cooperation, strengthened by close bilateral relations, has been elevated to strategic alliance because of the common the strategic interests in restraining the influence of the US and its regional allies in Central Asia and the Caspian region.

Indeed, in addition to the US threat, both countries are concerned about the soft security threats - from drug trafficking to extremism and the spread of terrorism. However, there is a shared understanding among the leaders of both countries that many regional issues – especially ones that breed extremism and terrorism – are rooted in the international system and the US policies, particularly in Afghanistan and the Middle East. As such, Iran and Russia have come to a common understanding of peace and stability in Central Asia while agreeing that the presence of the US military forces is detrimental to regional security. Therefore, the security cooperation between Iran and Russia in Central Asia is based on mutual interests and two parallel approaches of bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

In general, the factors that lead to Iran-Russia security cooperation and alignment in Central Asia include: Countering US, Turkish and Israeli influence in areas of common interest and based on the national security approaches of Iran and Russia; the Islamic Republic of Iran's efforts to take advantage of bilateral relations to further enhance its role and influence in resolving regional crises; controlling the extremist groups in Russia's peripheral regions; countering NATO's eastward expansion toward the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Finally, in analyzing the motivations of Iran-Russia cooperation in Central Asia in the context of the neo-realist theory, it could be said that although factors at the domestic and regional levels influence Iran-Russia cooperation in Central Asia, the most important incentive has been to mitigate the structural pressures of the international system arising from the US and its regional allies. As such, factors related to the international level have played a major role in this regard. Both countries oppose the presence and influence of the trans-regional powers, especially the United States, in

Central Asia. To summarize, it could be said that confronting the US influence and preventing the spread of radicalism and regional extremism – a factor which is also closely linked to the international level – has been the main motivation for cooperation between the two countries in Central Asia.

Keywords: Central Asia, Cooperation, Iran, Neo-Realism, Russia, Security Policy.

Game Theory and the Ups and Downs of Russian-European Relations in the New Millennium

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Abstract

The relationship between Russia and the European Union as two rational actors has had many ups and downs. In order to explain these developments scientifically, it seems necessary to use an appropriate analytical model. The theory of games, focusing on the logic of co-operation, interactions and differences among actors, can be a precise framework for understanding Russia-EU relations. Thus, the present research attempts to use games theory to answer the question of how Russia's and European Union's upward and downward relations can be investigated within the considered time horizon (2000-2018) which includes the causes and roots of the convergence and divergence in their stances, the types of decisions and decision-making under crisis conditions. To answer this question, the qualitative and documentary research methods have been used. Research findings show that during 2000 and 2004 actors' behaviors, which was affected by the pessimism in the wake of the security situation of the Kosovo crisis, are consistent with the conditions governing the prisoner's puzzle, which considering the level of commercial and economic interdependence, geographical proximity and terrorism related issues turns into a trigger strategy in the game theory. During 2004 to 2008, with the advent of the Orange Revolution, the deployment of the Missile Defense Shield and the Russo-Georgian war, the European Neighborhood Policy is gradually being set against Russia's neighborhood policy, forming a zero-sum game. In the years 2008 and 2012, Medvedev's proposal for a new security order, along with issues such as the financial crisis and the need for energy security, became a major driver for a turnaround in countering policies, thus forming the stag hunt game; thereafter, however, issues such as human rights, the intensification of competition in the energy sector, and the formation of the Syrian and

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Ukrainian crises put two actors on an inevitable head-on collision course, and turn it to the game of the chicken, which is still ongoing.

Conclusion

Given the eighteen-year evolution of Russian-EU relations and the logic of the various games of this era, the following general conclusions can be drawn:

1. General areas of divergence and convergence

Russian-European Union relations have always been influenced by climate change, the rise of China and other economic powers, non-proliferation and, of course, energy as a destabilizing and threatening factor, both of which are relatively intense. And they all further have been influenced by the divergence and convergence of Russia and the European Union. Despite these partnerships, differentiating and challenging factors such as the expansion of NATO and the European Union, competition for energy resources in the Caspian Sea, the European Union's willingness to cooperate with Eastern European countries, the European Union's efforts to influence and expand its relations with countries Central Asia and the Caucasus have always been influential in their ties.

Hence the relations between the two actors to eighteen years on the one hand were influenced by geopolitical, political, security, human rights and conflicting interests, which led on its turn to discourse, normative and identity disconnect, atmosphere of suspicion, ambiguity, tension and competition in the EU-Russia relationship; on the other hand, factors such as geographical proximity, new international challenges and threats, and interdependence— Russia's need for Western capital and technology to develop and EU's energy needs and imperative of cooperation with Russia in stabilizing and securing Eurasia— have pushed Brussels and Moscow inevitably to continue their cooperation and crisis management at least in the medium term.

2. The Big Game – Russia's move to a position of influential power and confrontation with the European Union

Investigating the developments from 1999 to 2018 shows Russia's upward trend in achieving internal stability and, consequently, providing a broad and important role in the external arena. In other words, a weak and passive Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union will find a new place in the power equations over time. So the whole process is on the one hand Russia's coming to power. But along this route there are ups and downs. Russia is pursuing models of cooperation and confrontation to achieve its

goals in Europe and in the world. First, it starts with confidence in Europe, and through various phases of trials and errors, which come with many benefits and costs, it tries to follow a path that is not a good sign for Europeans. On the other hand, this upward trend and Russia's actions in this, in the eyes of the Europeans, become something more than co-operation for the common good; in fact, Russia has raised Europeans' perception of threat and therefore this game has no meaning for Europe; that a new Russia is coming to power. Naturally, there is a great deal of backlash among these players, and Europe cannot and will not want the former Soviet Union to show its power once again in the Russian Federation. So the reason for Europe's on and off conflicting games is clear to us. Therefore, wherever co-operative game increases Russia's power and ability to confront Europe, Europe abandons cooperation and resort to confrontation.

3. EU-Russian relations - successive games and ups and downs of Russian-EU relations

The end point of this debate is the point of confrontation between Europe and Russia. The conflict that has continued to this day and the parties have maintained their leverage over each other. On the one hand, Russia's pressure on the countries concerned, the energy crisis and, of course, the Syrian crisis, and the pressure on Europe that comes from not resolving this crisis, and on the other, the extension of Russian sanctions, NATO expansion to the East, and European human rights issues still cast a shadow over their relationships. Given the developments and the issues raised, it seems that Russia and Europe continue to walk on a tightrope. These confrontations, which are a function of local, regional and international factors, give rise to sinusoidal relationships of cooperation and non-cooperation and action as per different games with different strategies.

Keywords: EU, Foreign Policy, Game Theory, Russia, Strategy.

Iran's Position in Russian Foreign Policy by Emphasizing Neo-Eurasianism

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Abstract

In recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has found a special place in the discourse of Russian foreign policy. Part of this importance can be traced back to the influence of the discourse of fourth political theory which has become the dominant approach in Russia and has made a significant impact in the last three decades on the Kremlin policies. The founder of this theory is the Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin who called it "neo-Eurasianism". Proponents of the aforementioned approach believe that Moscow, with a new foreign policy outlook, must move part of its strategy from the West to the East, looking for new allies in the East, including Iran. Iran and Russia have described each other as "strategic allies." This statement has been made many times by some of the elites of both countries, particularly by Putin himself and Iran's supreme leader. Hence, the main question of the article follows that: Given the centrality of neo-Eurasianism in the last two decades in Russia's foreign policy, what position does the Islamic Republic of Iran occupy in this approach? To answer this question, the hypothesis is raised that two countries regard each other's positions realistically (considering American transition to unilateralism), while in the context of neo-Eurasianism Iran has found a special place. Therefore, the findings of the article indicate that Neo-Eurasianism plays a clear role in Russia's foreign policy; consequently, Iran has a special place in this approach.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were significant changes in the geopolitical and geostrategic conditions of the two countries, Iran and Russia. This has led to political-security intricacies in the region as a result of the presence and influence of trans-regional powers. In the meantime, two important events have highlighted the recognition of Russian foreign policy in Iran's research and education system. The "strategic analysis" of foreign

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policy has thus gained in importance due to the following factors: first, the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution and, consequently, the need for historical revision of the friends and foes of the Islamic Revolution; second, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Russian Federation as a new actor transcending the culture of Marxism and restoring its history and destiny.

Meanwhile, the failures of Atlanticism in Russian foreign policy on the one hand, and Vladimir Putin's coming to power in 2000, on the other hand, have led to many changes in its foreign policy practices. The question of Russia's return to world hegemony has been dealt with by a new approach called "Eurasianism" and "Neo-Eurasianism". Proponents of this approach argue that Russia, due to its particular territorial character and geographical spread across the two continents of Europe and Asia, should pursue a balanced policy against the East and the West, ensuring that Moscow's economic and security interests are met. Alexander Dugin is the founder of the Fourth Political Theory calling it a theory of Neo-Eurasianism, in which the position of countries has changed in proportion to their importance, including Iran.

Dugin never restricted himself to writing philosophical-political texts; he along with Eduard Limonov formed the Bolshevik National Party after the October 1993 uprising. The party included a variety of intellectuals who were offended by what they saw as support for Yeltsin on the streets. They believed whether, eventually Russia would regain its lost popular support or the Soviet Union would be rebuilt in a new form. The key question, then, is as follows: what effect does the adoption of the Neo-Eurasist approach have on the Kremlin's policies in the face of its southern neighbor, i.e., Iran? In response to this question, the hypothesis is raised that by the domination of Dogan's Neo-Eurasianism in Russian foreign policy, the two countries can benefit from each other's relative strength in the new conditions created by the US transition to unilateralism and Eastward orientation, while being cautious during the transition, and can pass the situation with the least cost.

Theoretical Framework of this study is based on Alexander Dugin's theory of Neo-Eurasianism (The Fourth Political Theory). The premise of the fourth theory of politics is considered to be at odds with post-liberalism as a general practice as well as globalization, post-modernity, the "end of history", the current situation and the algebraic expansion of fundamentalist currents at the beginning of the 21st century. The Fourth Political Theory is the "Crusades" against Postmodern, post-industrial society; formations out of the function of the thought of liberalism; globalism and its logistical and technological foundations.

Overall, the findings of the present study suggest that it is difficult to accurately explain Russia's foreign policy due to multiple stimuli and diverse discourses. However, one can analyze Russia's foreign policy towards Iran from the perspective of Neo-Eurasianism as Russia has witnessed significant changes in its foreign policy discourse over the past few decades. Despite all these changes, however, the country has gradually gained relative stability at the level of discourse since Yeltsin's resignation and Putin's ascendance to power which has played an important role in the type of Russia's foreign relations. As Putin came to power, many of the characteristics and methods of domestic and foreign policy changed. He succeeded in freeing Russia from the harsh economic, political, social, and security impulses and in giving it a unified identity in its domestic and foreign policy. Among these attitudinal changes was Putin's Eastward-looking policy, which he strongly seeks to promote relations, particularly strategic relations with some neighboring countries, for its strategic interests in the region. Moscow is aware of the geopolitical depth, as well as Iran's cultural influence in the region, knowing that solving problems in the West Asian region is impossible without Iran's cooperation. Dugin correctly demonstrates that the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to the process of reform of the international system, in a way that unity has been created among countries once thought to be irreconcilable. An important example could be Russia's alliance with Iran, which Dugin and many of Russia's political elites see as an important strategy of Russia's geopolitical politics. Dugin's approach to Iran clearly shows that Russian political elites are willing to use relations with Iran to limit the US geopolitical position in the region.

However, despite the geopolitical, economic, military, strategic and even cultural interests and commonalities between the two countries, if we want to separate the alliance formation in Russia from this debate, there is still no cut and clear strategy from the two sides. Part of this instability and incoherence must be sought in the absence of sufficient consensus among the various elites of the two countries. In this regard, it is possible to examine the attitude of the elites of the two countries of Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The presence of two completely different political spectrums in the political system of the two countries has made it difficult for a strategic and even tactical cooperation breakthrough. There are Groups called Western and orientalist in both countries, which are often in the opposing positions, and they greatly influence the decision-making and policy-making of the diplomatic system. Likewise, there are some scholars and politicians in Iran, influential on public opinion, who assess current

conditions and partnerships as well as Putin's pragmatic policy in line with memories and former excesses of Russia.

Keywords: Alexander Dugin, Islamic Republic of Iran, Neo-Eurasianism, Russia, Russian Foreign Policy.

Russia and Efforts to Counteract the Effects of the US Missile Defense Shield in Eastern Europe

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Abstract

The deployment of the US missile defence system in Eastern Europe is one of the most strategic discussions that in the last few decades have been at the forefront of regional and global news. Further developments and expansion of this system into Russia's western borders have cast a shadow over Moscow-Washington relations. The US has repeatedly cited possible threats from Iran and North Korea as the main cause for its deployment. However, Moscow officials have hit back at Washington's move, considering the deployment and expansion of US missile systems in Eastern Europe as a means to maintain and expand US unilateralism and regional domination as well as a threat to Russia's military and missile capabilities. Consequently, to offset the effects of this system, Russia has resorted to adverse counter and retaliatory measures. This article attempts to answer the following key question: What steps should Russia take to counteract the effects of the US missile shield in Eastern Europe? The paper assumes that since Moscow views the deployment of the US missile shield in Eastern Europe as an attempt to control and diminish Russia as one of the dominant missile powers, it has taken diplomatic and military measures against the American missile program and has sought to increase its missile and military capabilities in order to maintain a so-called strategic balance in Eastern Europe, which could bring a new arms competition in the region. In regards to methodology, this is a qualitative study and method of qualitative analysis has been used.

US-Russian relations have been strategic issues of the international system during the Cold War and post-Cold War era. These relations have been influenced by various regional and international issues at different historical levels and the political relations between the two countries have turned out to be of a particular complex nature. The issue of the deployment

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of the US anti-missile defence shield, which has remained on the table between Moscow and Washington for nearly half a century, is considered as one of the most important strategic disputes in relations between the two sides in the post-Soviet era. Recent US activities and movements in the Eastern Europe territory, generally in the form of political intervention and efforts to bring the republics of the region under the US security umbrella, including but not limited to signing bilateral and multilateral military agreements with Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, the Czech Republic and Poland and most importantly efforts to develop several missile defence systems in addition to NATO's support, reflect America's long-term goals for expanding its sphere of influence and strategic siege of Russia, which have consistently raised alarm and concern among Moscow officials. Since 2007, the Russians have repeatedly stated that the missile defence shield is a threat to both Russia and the former Soviet states, which will induce the start of a new arms competition. The idea of a missile defence shield design is nothing new. During the Cold War, this idea was initiated by Ronald Reagan as part of America's grand strategy for deploying missiles, equipment, and military bases around the world and in space, leading to the Star Wars Plan. Since its launch, the Pentagon has spent billions of dollars on research and development on this project. The White House has claimed that it aims to establish a missile shield to protect US and NATO against threats from North Korean attacks and Iranian ballistic missiles; The Kremlin, however, views it as a serious threat to its national security. Moscow is very serious in its stance, and has repeatedly stated that the US justification for establishing a missile shield is a mere pretext for siege and capture of Russia. Russia's hostility to the US missile shield plan is based on a special understanding of US strategic goals. These goals include full multi-layered domination and the first nuclear crippling policy, which includes the notion of nuclear superiority and NATO expansion within Russia's borders. Russia views US actions in this regard as an attempt to gain 'strategic superiority' and a 'zero-sum game' that, while weakening its strategic depth, has targeted Russia's geopolitical contraction and non-alignment with European arrangements. In such a situation, Russia is exposed to a new and complex security puzzle in the Eastern European region that requires a reasonable deterrence in the region. In this regard, Russia hits back at US missile threats by attempting to prevent regional expansion of Western influence abroad, while maintaining its deterrence through diplomatic and military measures and preventing the formation of regional arrangements in the interests of Washington and its regional allies.

1. Research question

This article seeks to answer the following key question: What steps has Russia taken to counteract the effects of the US missile shield in Eastern Europe?

2. Research hypothesis

The paper assumes since Moscow views the deployment of the US missile shield in Eastern Europe as an attempt to attempt to control and diminish Russia as one of the dominant missile powers, Russia, in response to this plan, has taken diplomatic and military measures in order to maintain a so-called strategic balance in Eastern Europe that could bring a new arms competition in the region

3. Methodology

Present research is based on qualitative analysis method. The method of gathering research data and information is also carried out through library studies (documents, books, journals and websites) and searches occur in specialized reviews and journals.

4. Conclusion

The deployment of US missile defence shields in Eastern Europe is one of the most important security and geopolitical issues in Russian-US relations, affecting greatly the Washington-Moscow relations as well as oft associated Cold War space between the two countries. The US has repeatedly cited possible threats from Iran and North Korea as the main cause for its deployment, but Moscow officials have responded to Washington's move, considering the deployment of US missile defence systems in Eastern Europe as a means to maintain and expand US unilateralism and regional domination as well as the greatest threat to its deterrence, aimed at isolating Russia's territories and preventing greater Moscow's influence in the region. By deploying and extending missile defence shield and NATO's expansion to Eastern European, the United States seeks to make regional arrangements and goals in line with the goals and interests of Washington and its European allies, and in doing so, not only does it seize and weaken Russia's missile capability, but also could gain regional and global hegemonic power and prevent regional and global powers from challenging Washington's goals and policies. Meanwhile, due to geopolitical contraction and tight condition of security, Russia has sought to empower its missiles to create a strong and effective defence and deterrent against the menace of threatening US power and it is taking steps to thwart Western threats in the Eastern European region. Consequently, Moscow by diplomatic and military action is seeking to reduce US missile threats in the Eastern European region and to challenge US objectives, including Russia's geopolitical siege and ever-strengthening

US military hegemony in the region; while not only will these actions intensify arms competition in the east Europe, but also will strain the prospect of peace and stability in the region.

Keywords: Balance of Threat, Eastern Europe, Missile Defense Shield, Russia, USA.

Pan-Turkism, Construction of Identity and the Formation of the Republic of Azerbaijan (1890-1920)

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Abstract

The formation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic took place when nationalistic movements were at their zenith around the world. The Caucasus was amongst the regions that were heavily influenced by such movements. Independent states such as Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan came into being after the collapse of the tsarist empire. The establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic with the centrality of the M \ddot{u} savat Party triggered much attention in Iran. Selecting the name "Azerbaijan" for the region that was formerly called "Aran" was interpreted as a plot to split Iran's Turkish-populated Regions, consequently realizing the long-sought dream of panTurkists.

The main question of this article is as follows: what was the role of pan-Turkist intellectuals of Caucasus in the emergence and establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic? This article aims to respond to the abovementioned question by emphasizing on the "constructed" collective identities and utilizing the theories of intellectuals such as Eric Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Miroslav Hroch, and Paul Brass, to analyze the process of national identity construction led by Azeri intellectuals. This article stresses that the efforts of three generations of Azeri intellectuals have played a major role in the emergence and formation of the central idea of an Azeri Nation-state. The three generations (1870 - 1918), in a gradual process along with political goals, were able to succeed in creating and spreading a national identity among Caucasian Muslims and utilizing it as the basis for the political action, during the political conflicts caused by the fall of the tsarist empire.

The people of the Muslim regions of the Caucasus, which before the Russo-Persian wars were considered to be a part of the Iranian society, in addition to political affiliations, possessed a historical, cultural and religious

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interconnectedness with Iran. 100 years after separation from Iran, the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was due to the newly found identity which emphasized on distinguishing itself from the Iranian culture.

The foundations of this transformation were shaped during the colonization of the region by tsarist Russia. With the outset of the Russian Rule, a gradual process of colonial modernization formed which did not pick up until after 1870. The discovery of oil in Baku was the factor that helped to increase the pace of these changes. The most notable achievement of such modernization was the creation of new intellectual groups amongst Georgian, Armenian and Muslim ethnic groups. The Caucasian Muslim intellectuals were a newly found group which formed the basis of a significant cultural change in the region. This article has analyzed the evolution of three generations of these intellectuals between the years 1870 and 1918. The first generation includes several figures, the most notable one being Mirza Fatali Akhundov. The main characteristic of this generation was the simultaneous interest in both Iranian identity and Russian modernization. Their most important role was initiating a culturally enlightened movement amongst the Muslims of the Caucasus and adopting the local Turkish language as the literary language. The second generation of intellectuals consisted of intellectuals who attempted to recover the language and the cultural heritage and share their recovery amongst the masses via media tools. A dichotomy towards Iranian culture existed amongst this generation. Even though groups such as Ahmad Agaiov have friendly tendencies towards Iran and some even supported Iranians during the Constitutional Revolution, but groups such as Yellow and Blue and Hossein Zadeh have had hostile propensities towards Iranian culture and Shiite identity. The third step was finally taken towards political conflicts. During the fall of the tsarist empire, with the intensification of the identity conflict in the Caucasus and Pan-Turkist objectives and its peak during the Ottoman Empire, the third generation of Azeri Intellectuals took the ethnically constructed identity from the cultural to political realms and set it as the basis for the establishment of their national unit.

This article emphasizes on the formation of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918, as being an ideal example of a national unit that was shaped without any precedent in history before the 19th century, and immediately during political and social conflicts which led to the fall of the tsarists. During this process, the Turkish identity and the idea of Azerbaijan were segmented on the basis and through the utilization of modern public tools. During the process of the “constructed” identity, some identical elements became

prominent and were centralized as the definitions of identity (such as the Turkish language, Turkish myths, and the bond between the Caucasus and Anatolian Turks), and some were alienized (such as the Persian language, historical bonds between Caucasus and Iran) and some were marginalized and based on immediate goals were put on standby (such as Shiite elements). Through a gradual process, they turned the idea of “Azerbaijan Nation” from an obscure sense into a coherent idea and political plan. The occurrence of the First World War, the deterioration and fall of the Russian Empire and the peak of pan-Turkism in the Ottoman Empire were amongst significant and influential factors in the formation of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Perhaps the absence of any of the above factors would have hindered the efforts of Caucasian intellectuals towards forging the new identity and creating a national unit on its basis. However, the simultaneous occurrence of these factors synergized the efforts of these intellectuals in constructing a new identity for the Muslims of Caucasus and led to the establishment of the independent national unit.

Keywords: Construction of Identity, Notion of Nation, Pan-Turkism, The Intellectuals, The Republic of Azerbaijan.

A Comparative Study of Russia's Relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia during Medvedev's Presidency, 2008-2012

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Abstract

After Russia's presidential elections in 2008, Dmitry Medvedev took office as Vladimir Putin's preferred successor and shortly thereafter announced a reordering of Russian foreign policy intentions and actions based on the principles of international law, multi-polarity, non-confrontation with foreign countries, and protection of all Russian citizens in and out of the country. According to Russian foreign policy schools of thought, Medvedev was portrayed as a western-oriented liberal who insisted on improving Russia's relations with Western countries because of the perceived common security threats and the need for greater economic and political liberalization. This foreign policy prioritization led to changes in Russian foreign policy attitudes toward the Middle East and Moscow's relations with key regional powers. To understand the underlying factors and the consequences of this policy shift, the following two central research questions were analyzed: 1. What were the top priorities and goals of Russian foreign policy under Medvedev? 2. What kind of changes did Medvedev's main foreign policy priorities bring to Russia's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia? In order to test the main hypothesis of this study which postulated that "economic development as Russia's top foreign policy priority during Medvedev's presidency led him to adopt a western oriented approach and to revise relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia", the authors examine the principles and patterns of Russia's foreign policy, its foreign policy actions in the Middle East, and the nature of its relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia during Medvedev's presidency. The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq and the emergence of a power vacuum in this country, followed by the beginning of Arab Spring in 2010, Saudi fears of the establishment of a new regional balance of power system in favor of Iran, gradually intensified the

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rivalry and hostility between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It is significant to note that one of the most important factors that must be considered in the new round of competition between these two Middle Eastern countries is the nature of these countries' relations with the great powers and particularly with the United States and Russia. The super powers' rivalry in the Middle East has had a great impact on the foreign relations of the regional powers.

The main purpose of the present paper is to analyze Russia's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia from 2008 to 2012. The reason for selecting this time period is that under Medvedev, Kremlin adopted a somewhat different and western-oriented foreign policy approach. Medvedev had been known as a more liberal politician who called for increased cooperation with Western countries, especially the United States. His goal was to encourage more high-tech investment in the country, more transfer of advanced technology in order to facilitate economic modernization of Russia. Consequently, Moscow's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia were transformed during this period, because Medvedev was trying to avoid a confrontation with the West. Therefore, Medvedev had to distance himself from Iran as a country which was accused by the West of seeking to change the status quo. In contrast, the gradual movement to Saudi Arabia's position which was viewed as a close regional ally of the United States was expected to show that Medvedev had no intention to adopt a confrontational foreign policy approach toward the Middle East. A lesson to be learnt by the regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia is that in their relations with the great powers, they must consider the possibility of short-term and unanticipated changes in the foreign policy priorities of even their most reliable allies. The need to be vigilant against any minor changes in bilateral and multilateral relations is evident. It is shown that Iran's relations with Russia changed during Medvedev's leadership because he was to a certain degree prepared to sacrifice Moscow's ties with Iran in favor of improving its relations with the United States. Medvedev chose to expand its relations with US regional allies and to put a distance between Russia and the countries which had hostile relations with Washington. Examples of his less-friendly policy actions in relation to Iran include his concern over Iran's nuclear program in the second half of 2009, his decision to delay the completion of the construction of Bushehr power plant, and finally his foot-dragging and reluctance to proceed promptly in the delivery of the S-300 missile systems to Iran based on a bilateral contract signed by the two neighboring countries. In comparison, Russia's relations with Saudi Arabia, which had been expanding following Putin's visit to Riyadh in 2007, continued flourishing under Medvedev. Incidentally, the desire to improve Russian relations with

Saudi Arabia was in contrast to the US President Obama's policy that specified the White House would act cautiously concerning its military intervention in proxy wars in the Middle East. His administration was keen to resolve the hostility between Iran and all Arab States including Saudi Arabia which had suffered further deterioration since 2003. This shift in Obama's attitude toward Iran irritated Saudi Arabia. Medvedev's readiness to improve relations with the pro-Western Arab States, and Riyadh's decision to expand relations with other great powers helped improvement in Russia's dealings with Saudi Arabia.

Finally, the conclusion of this study is that under the leadership of Medvedev, unlike Putin's presidency, Kremlin's goals of achieving higher economic development and improving relations with the West led to a gradual aloofness in Russia's relations with Iran and a relative closeness in relations with Saudi Arabia. Medvedev had a tendency to avoid confrontation with Western countries, and to strive for greater integration in the international system. However, he did not succeed in lessening Russia's oil and gas dependency, and enhancing its international and regional position.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Iran, Medvedev, Middle East, Moscow, Putin, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Security Threats.

Russia's Imperial Expansion and Geopolitical Change in the Global Situation of the Caspian Sea (1550-1800 A.D.)

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Abstract

For a long time, the Caspian Sea played a significant role in commercial relations between Muslims and the people who lived in the flatlands in south Russia as well as Eastern Europeans. The history of these commercial relations can be traced back to ancient times. Some Greek and ancient Iranian sources had references to these relations. Nevertheless, there are numerous evidence that point to the existence of a prosperous trans-Caspian trade in the early and medieval Islamic period. The volume of this trade experienced its zenith during the 10th and 11th centuries of which a good part belonged to the Iranian people. These people were living in the lands around the Caspian Sea from Darband (modern Дербент) in the west to Mianqishlagh peninsula (near modern Aqtau) in the east. People of Daylam, Rouyân, Tabarestân, Gorgân in southern Iranian shores owned a considerable share of this trade. This situation, although changeable and limited, continued to be controlled by Muslims until the advent of the 16th century. This was a crucial time in the history of the Caspian Sea trade when the situation began to change in favor of Russia.

This study aims to trace a historical change in the global situation of the Caspian Sea during recent centuries. Its central question is that, how, and under what conditions the Caspian Sea changed to become a strategic field for Tsarist Russia's Asian policy. To explain the change we made use of Wallerstein's Modern World-System theory. Actually, this study attempts to trace a gradual but continuous change in the situation of the Caspian Sea during 1550 and 1800, which covers the Phase I to III in Wallerstein's socio-historical explanative theory. Regarding the methodological considerations, it is a historical study with arguments based on an analytical survey of historical evidence within a conceptual framework that is inspired and manipulated by the Modern World-System theory. To advance the study, we tried to make use of available material. Besides a bunch of Persian and Arabic sources which includes both archival documents and books, there

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are several Russian contemporary sources, which we used to base our historical explanation on first-hand material. In addition, many recent studies have been employed with a critical approach.

Our concluding remarks could be organized and explained within two distinct historical periods; prior to the mid-16th, the Caspian Sea was host to a traditional marine trade within which the Iranian tradesmen played a significant role. The volume of this marine trade was not considered in comparison with that of the 18th century onward. Its nature was local and the most part of it transferred through two lines: south coasts, that included scattered points in Gilân (Daylam), Mazandarân (Tabaristân) and Gorgân (Astarabâd) with the small ports of western and northern coasts from Lankarân (modern Lenkoran) to Baku, Darband, Samandar (near modern Makhachkala) and Itil and, in a later time Sarây (near modern Astrakhan). This line passed through the southern and western coastal regions of the Caspian Sea and led to the mouth of the Volga (Itil) river. The second line bridged the eastern trade of China and India through Transoxiana and Mianghishlaq peninsula with Russia and Eastern Europe. Studies by Noonan and Kovalev based on newly discovered hordes of Islamic coins in western Russia show us that there had been a prosperous trade between eastern lands of the Caspian Sea through Russia and northern parts of Eastern Europe. This phase of Caspian trade experienced considerable growth during the 9th to 11th centuries and was developed by Muslim people who lived in the adjacent region.

The second period began in the mid-16th century during which the geopolitical situation of the Caspian Sea experienced a gradual change. Russia's conquest of Astrakhan (1558 A.D.) under Ivan IV proved to be a turning point in this process. This process was fulfilled by the strategic policies of Peter I and Catherin II in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Under Peter the Great, Russia experienced her crucial phase of westernized modernization and this development affected Russia's approach toward Asia and the Caspian Sea. In the last decade of his life, Peter I tried to manipulate a strategy toward this encircled Sea and its adjacent region. At the top of his motives was Asian commerce whose importance was increasing constantly in the course of the 18th century. Russian-Iranian trade through the Caspian Sea experienced an apogee in the early 18th century. However, the situation changes drastically following the collapse of the Safavid state in 1722. This catastrophic event convinced Peter to launch his famous Persian expedition as the second turning point in our historical survey. Moreover, Peter, I supported a modern and scientific plan to map and navigate the Caspian Sea. Peter's successors, especially Catherin II and her mighty prime minister, i.e.

Gregory Potemkin, followed this plan more seriously. During 1770-1773, S. G. Gmelin traveled to the Iranian coasts of the Caspian Sea to advance a scientific-espionage program. His three-volume travelogue includes a wealth of information about the Caspian Sea and its Iranian shores. Finally, Mark Voinovitch's diplomatic mission and his failed attempts to establish a trading factory in Ashuradeh (actually a castle) was the third turning point in the history of Caspian trade and Russian-Iranian relations. This is a meaningful end for our study, which means that in the advent of 19th century Russia was in a situation to use military power to protect her domination over the Caspian Sea.

Hence, according to our explanation, the gradual formation of tsarist Russia's Caspian strategy was in line with a gradual change in the global situation of this Euro-Asian government as a rising empire. This changing situation had consequential results for Iran and its commercial relations with Russia. From the late 18th century, Russia took the upper hand in Caspian trade, and Iran lacked a naval power to ward off this strategic change. In fact, Iran's historical contribution to Caspian trade continued under Russia's dominance and her continuous attempt to pass from a peripheral zone to the core. Hence, the 18th century has been a crucial period in the history of Iranian presence in the Caspian Sea and its adjacent region as well as their contribution to its economic life.

Keywords: Colonial Expansion, Iran, Marine Trade, Modern World-System, The Caspian Sea, Tsarist Russia, Wallerstein.

The Impact of the Eurasian Economic Union on the Geoeconomics Situation of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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Abstract

After the Cold War, Tendency toward Regionalism has become more evident in different parts of the World. Central Asia is a Geostrategic area that has always been at the center of Russia's attention and the Superpowers of China and America. China's attention to this Region in its plan (One Belt One Road) for a modern-day connection to Europe is an example of the important position of Central Asia. In this region, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have good potential for raising the economic level of the countries of the region, which Iran's foreign policy can exploit in line with its national interests. The Eurasian Economic Union is one of the unions that have been established as regional Groupings in Central Asia. Iran in line with its unique Geopolitical and Geostrategic and as a neighboring country to the union can benefit from the role of this influential union. Indeed, this can happen for any country, depending on its Geopolitical weight. The present paper attempts to answer the following question: Do the Eurasian Economic Union and Iran's membership in it influence Iran's Geo-economic position? The findings of the paper show that Iran's proximity to union member states and Iran's future membership in the Eurasian Economic Union will impact most Iran's geo-economic position. Adopting a qualitative and descriptive-analytical approach, the paper examines the impact of the Eurasian Economic Union on the geo-economic situation of Iran. Geo-economic and economic convergence theories and approaches have been used to examine the politics and impact of regionalism on Iran's geo-economic position.

After the Cold War, Tendency toward Regionalism has become more evident in different parts of the World. Central Asia is a Geostrategic area

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that has always been at the center of Russia's attention and the Superpowers of China and America. China's attention to this Region in its plan (One Belt One Road) for a modern-day connection to Europe is an example of the important position of Central Asia. In this region, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have good potential for raising the economic level of the countries of the region, which Iran's foreign policy can exploit in line with its national interests. The Eurasian Economic Union is one of the unions that have been established as regional Groupings in Central Asia. Iran in line with its unique Geopolitical and Geostrategic and as a neighboring can benefit from the role of this influential union. Indeed, this can happen for any country, depending on the Geopolitical weight of the countries.

One of the requirements of developing countries is to pay attention to the geopolitical and Geo-economic position of their land. According to various theories such as Heartland, Energy Oval, and Center, the territory of Iran has a special geopolitical and Geo-economic position. Participating in and accelerating the process of membership of regional organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union, can play a special role in enhancing Iran's Geo-economic position and strengthening its national interests. Geo-economic components (Power, Geography, Economics) form the basis of economic convergence. In regional economic convergence theories, business promotion plays an important role. Economic unions were formed to promote trade in the aftermath of World War II. Economic regionalism implies the willingness of a group of countries in a specific geographical area for economic cooperation, the first signs of which are the conclusion of preferential agreements and the growth of trade and investment between them, and finally the establishment of economic union. Concerning the successful levels of cooperation in a given region, the theorists of the field differed in the extent and level of integration between countries based on the variables affecting it.

1. The Main Question

Do the Eurasian Economic Union and Iran's membership in it influence the Geo-economics Status of Iran?

2. Hypothesis

The research hypothesis is that the Eurasian Economic Union and its membership will impact Iran's Geo-economic position.

3. Methodology

Adopting a qualitative and descriptive-analytical approach, the paper examines the impact of the Eurasian Economic Union on the geo-economic situation of Iran by making use of library resources and Internet sites.

4. Conclusion

This article posed the question as to how and to which extent the Eurasian Economic Union and its membership would affect Iran's Geo-economic situation. To answer this question, each of the member states of the Union and their potentials was briefly reviewed; Remember, in modern regionalism, the power of states and their hierarchical levels of power affect the relations of nations. Against the backdrop of discussions on Iran and Central Asia, issues such as Iran's cultural (Geo-cultural) and historical relations with the Caspian states can be discussed. However, the present study emphasizes the centrality of energy and transit— within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union— and the degree of importance attached to it in economic discourse governing international relations.

It has been argued that one of the key roles of the regional organization is that regional agreements encourage governments to support each other in the face of nationalism and ethnic conflicts in particular regions and states, and they do provide additional impetus for regional solutions through shared cultures and experiences. Furthermore, it helps create favorable economic conditions for the member countries. The aforementioned role, however, is perhaps more relevant to the situation in Central Asia and Iran than any other role; Therefore, Iran's membership in this regional organization can reduce the number of challenges. Given the countries' view on economic integration for development and, consequently, the growth of regionalism, we have witnessed the emergence of various regional organizations and regional groupings. In this regard, Iran's geopolitical, geostrategic and Geo-economic position requires that the authorities have a proper understanding of these situations. Nevertheless, given the constraints on foreign policy imposed by transnational powers against Iran, the Iranian government faces challenges in the international and regional arena; though on the other hand it also can reap the opportunities created by it. Russia's (as the alliance's major power) relations with Western Europe and the US can be used as opportunities.

In the Iranian case, we see Iran participating in regional organizations such as ECO, OPEC as the founding member, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and more recently the Eurasian Economic Union as an observer member. It was therefore assessed that the strategy of the Eurasian Economic Community countries, their attitudes towards their neighbors and

the economic developments that have taken place and will continue to occur in the future, could impact Iran's Geo-economic situation, given Iran's membership in the union. The economic development of the countries of the Union will strongly depend on the energy transportation, export and import of goods; so Iran's land can serve as a transit route for energy and goods. Focusing more on Iran's economic and trade deals with these countries, and vice versa, taking into consideration the role of the New Silk Road which could be a bridge between Iran and Central Eurasia, strengthening the trilateral mechanisms as well as mediating the central Eurasian conflicts, practical measures in the field of extraterritorial cultivation with Kyrgyzstan and Russia, etc. will certainly be effective in boosting Iran's economic power. Iran's capabilities will be strengthened within the framework of membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, and the geo-economic position of Iran will be improved.

Keywords: Central Asia, Eurasian Economic Union, Geoeconomics Position, Geopolitics Position, Iran.