

## **The Impact of Geopolitics and Balance of Power in the Caspian Sea: Russia and its Return to the Past Policy**

**Ali Akbar Jafari\***

Associate Professor of International Relations, Mazandaran University

**Dayyan Jaanbaaz**

PhD in International Relations, University of Tehran

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### **Abstract**

After the Soviet Union collapse, the geopolitics of the Caspian Sea region was at the center of competition between coastal, regional and trans-regional powers. In the past two decades, due to the geopolitical realities of the region including (the Caspian sea legal regime, the geopolitical position of the Caspian Sea at the center of the geopolitical scopes of the Caucasus and Central Asia, the affiliations of regional and trans-regional powers in the Caspian, the type of behavioral patterns of the Caspian sea littoral states in political and economic relations with each other and transnational states and finally all types of geopolitics governing the region) this place has played the role of Eurasia's new Heartland. In this connection, the geographical features of each country in the Caspian Sea have a special place for it. Russia is one of those countries which on the one hand, try to expand and maintain its former interests in this region by trying to expand its influence in the newly independent states and control the rise and expansion of American power in the region, on the other. Therefore, the research main question is that what kind of impacts the geopolitical features of the Caspian region have had on Russia's attempt to return to its past imperial policies? In response to this question, the assumption of the research is that Russia has been struggling to remain the most powerful actor in the region through dynamic economy, political, security and environmental components of the Caspian Sea in an effort to remain the most powerful country of the region.

The collapse of Soviet Union and the emergence of four new republics on the periphery of the Caspian Sea on the one hand, and the internationalization of rich hydrocarbon resources on the other, were the main cause for the region to regain its special political, economic and security status. Meanwhile, the gradual presence of some national and

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\* E-mail: a.jafari@umz.ac.ir (Corresponding author)

transnational actors such as large-scale transnational entities, international military institutions and oil companies have increased the political, economic and security complexities of the region and has virtually eliminated regional convergence among five Caspian Sea littoral states namely (Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan). In addition, the inalienability of the Caspian Sea legal regime and the quality of relations between the coastal states with regional and transnational powers due to geopolitics of the region on the one hand and the influence of transnational countries that are reluctant to observe formulation of regional arrangements in this area on the other, has led the Caspian Sea countries to pursue different strategies for achieving their national interests.

Russia is one of these coastal states that is trying to consolidate its influence in the area and in order to confront the influence of great powers in the region, it has made extensive efforts in economic, political, security and environmental dimensions. In this article, two hypotheses have been proposed. The first hypothesis is considered and proved to be the main hypothesis of the research and the second one is rejected as a subsidiary hypothesis. The main hypothesis is that Russia, using the Caspian Sea geopolitical partition, is trying to gain more power in the region to remain the most influential actor. The second hypothesis, which is considered as a sub-hypothesis of the paper is that Russia's efforts to improve its superpower status in the region due to the weakness of its political, economic and communication status, will cost it a lot. Due to some factors, chief among them the geostrategic position, the importance of security, the prevalence of some crises and ethnic differences, the existence of energy reserves and its transit to consumer markets, the region has always been the focus of regional and trans-regional powers. Russia's weakness after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yeltsin government western-oriented approach led to a lack of attention to the region which resulted in the vacuum of power. The new conditions after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the geopolitical advantages of the region have led to rivalries among various powers for their presence and influence in the region. Therefore, after Putin came to power, Russia changed its approach toward the region, and now the Caspian Sea is considered to be a geostrategic and geopolitical place in the minds of Russian leaders and the main competition point between Russia and the West, especially the US. In addition to using bilateral relations, these powers seek to benefit from the advantages of multilateral cooperation. Consequently, we are witnessing the activities of many organizations (especially the economic and security ones) with Western and Russian inclinations in the region.

Western powers are trying to increase their presence and influence in the region and take advantage of economic and security benefits. In this regard, NATO is pursuing a “Partnership for Peace” program and “Energy Security Plan” in order to secure its goals. In addition to providing educational, financial and economic assistance and investment programs for transferring energy from East to the West and providing assistance for the resolution of conflicts, the West tries to prevent Russia, China and Iran from having influence in the region. In addition, the littoral States of the Caspian Sea after independence were reluctant to engage with Western powers due to the fear of returning Russian domination and their need for financial and economic assistance.

Meanwhile, the economic infrastructure of these countries, which was a heritage from the Soviet era, was dependent on Russia. Therefore subjects like security issues, ethnic differences and existence of some crises have led these countries to ignore relations and cooperation with Russia. Therefore, Russia monitors the spread of political and security influence of outside powers especially those countries which compete for having access to the region’s energy resources in order to maintain its traditional influence in the region. In this framework, controlling and moderating Russia’s rivals is Moscow’s another goal to stop the West’s attempt to dominate the region. In sum, Russia’s strategy in the Caspian Sea region is an attempt to create a coalition and renewed economic, political, security and strategic integration with independent republics, emerging powers such as China and Iran, as well as active membership in regional organizations of this area in order to restore its lost position. Achievement of this goal, in addition to increasing the competition in the region, causes serious conflicts among relevant actors. Therefore, the adoption of cautious policies is the most important issue that Russia should always pay close attention in order to perform its plans and achieve its goal.

**Keywords:** Caspian Sea, Geopolitics, National Interests, Return to the Past Policy, Russia.

## **The Idea of Pan-Islamism and the Revival of Muslims Textile Industry in the South Caucasus (Case Study: Economic Achievements of Haj Zeynalabdin Taghiyev)**

**Sajjad Hoseini\***

Assistant Professor of History, Mohaghegh Ardabili University

**Jafar Aghazadeh**

Associate Professor of History, Mohaghegh Ardabili University

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### **Abstract**

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Muslims observed the progressive development of the Western world in all political, social, economic and cultural spheres, while simultaneously observed the decline of Islamic civilization more and more in the aftermath of the austerity measures by their government. Then they started to find reasons and compensate for this regression. Muslim political and social elites found the way to work together and presented the famous idea of “Pan-Islamism” to treat the pains of backwardness. Meanwhile, Muslims living in the Tsarist Russian territories felt this pain through the siege of a progressive Christian state and viewed it as a matter of solidarity among Muslims. Although Muslims were scattered in eastern and western Russian territory, Russia’s western Muslims, especially the South Caucasus Azeris, were more active in Russia than other Muslims who lived in Eastern part of the Russia. This Muslim minority, who were living in the Tsarist Russian Empire which was adjacent to the borders of the Muslim states of Iran and the Ottoman Empire, closely monitored the upheavals in this area because of having close links with the elites of the two lands. The Southern Caucasi Azeri Muslims belonged to the two major Islamic religions, Shiites (majority) and Sunnis (minority). Because of ethnic-religious conflicts with Armenian Christians, regardless of any sectarian differences, they insisted on their faith and were proponents of Pan-Islamism. The growing importance of oil in the world and the benefits of oil exploration in Absheron Peninsula and subsequent increase in Caucasian Muslim Azeri communities wealth provided necessary grounds for financial support of that idea.

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\* E-mail: s.hoseini@uma.ac.ir (Corresponding author)

The idea of Pan-Islamism emerged in contrast to the growing power of the West and from the very beginning it gave way to this kind of thinking about the backwardness of Muslims in comparison to the West. Economy was one of the most important issues in comparing Muslim backwardness in relation with the West. These issues instigated Muslim elites to advocate the idea of Pan-Islamism in order to make their utmost efforts to rebuild Muslim society's economy and at the same time steps were taken to revive various industries. One of the first industries to be considered in this revitalization was textile. This industry has been one of the most important industries in Islamic lands throughout history. From the very beginning, Muslims had high value for textile and this caused the industry to become widely flourished over the times in all Islamic lands. With the prevalence of machinery in the West, Muslim textile industry which was mostly handmade, lost its ability to compete with the West mechanized industries.

In new era, Muslims attempted to obtain the west new technology and regain the ability to compete. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Muslims from the South Caucasus region tasted the bitterness of backwardness more than the rest of the Muslims because of living in the Tsarist Russian Empire with Christian ethnic groups such as the Russians and Armenians. They were always pioneered in obtaining modern manifestations of Western civilization. They adapted this technology from the West and Russia and used it in direction of the excellence of Islam and the happiness and good fortune of Muslims. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Muslim economic elites of the South Caucasus were influenced by the progressive views and ideas of prominent thinkers and scholars from the Muslim world, especially the notion of Pan-Islamism in the aftermath of reconstruction of the Islamic civilization. The main feature of this competition was the textile industry. On top of those economic elites; there stood Zeynalabdin Taghiyev, a millionaire businessman from Baku. With the establishment of textile factories in the suburbs of Baku, this industry got out of Russians and Armenians monopoly. This was hardly possible due to the high influence of the owners of those industries and their Christianity affiliations with the Tsarist Russian Government. As the founder of this industry, Taghiyev was one of the followers of the idea of the Pan-Islamism in the South Caucasus region. Contacts with Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī, material and spiritual support from the followers of the idea of Pan-Islamism in the South Caucasus lands and other Islamic territories, supporting the publication, distribution of *Habal-al-Matin* newspaper - the main voice of the idea of Pan-Islamism - and publications of the exquisite Qur'an and sending it to the kings and Muslims in order to alert the issue of unity among Muslim states,

were the main manifestations of that trend. The Founding of textile industry in the South Caucasus region was also in line with that idea. The close cooperation of the textile manufacturers of South Caucasus Muslims with a company named Islamiyya in Isfahan and the establishment of the company's representatives in Baku and other Muslim cities of the Tsarist Russia, the request for the use of the emblem of Lion and Sun as the symbol of a Muslim state on textile products as well as creating employment opportunities for Shiite and Sunni Muslims, showed that apart from any religious intolerance, the Tsarist Russia was a notable manifestation of the desire for unity in the Islamic world.

This paper which is based on descriptive-analytical method and relies on library and documentary sources, raises this question whether the textile industry of the South Caucasus Muslims in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was established in line with promoting and strengthening the idea of Pan-Islamism? It is hypothesized that the textile industry of Muslims in the South Caucasus was founded to promote the idea of unity in the Islamic world. Although the issue of the textile industry of South Caucasian Muslims in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been repeatedly studied by researchers from the Republic of Azerbaijan, but the relationship between the textile industry of South Caucasian Muslims and the idea of Pan-Islamism has not been investigated in none of those studies. In Iran, the subject has not been investigated thoroughly. In an article titled "The idea of Pan-Islamism among the Muslims of South Caucasus (1870-1920)", the intellectual and political manifestations of the idea of Pan-Islamism in the South Caucasus region were discussed and the effects of that idea on the behavior of the economic elite and the textile industry of this region received no attention. Moreover, in an article titled "The emergence of modern Iranian capitalism: a case study of Islamiyah Company", the subject of the textile industry of the South Caucasus was reflected briefly in the form of the Islamiyah Company in just two lines.

**Keywords:** Haj Zeynalabdin Taghiyev, Islamiyya Company, Pan-Islamism, Textile Industry, The South Caucasus.

## **Reviewing and Comparing the Role of Social Development Indices in Tendency toward Radical Islam in Central Asia**

**Mohsen Diyanat\***

Assistant Professor of Political Sciences, Payame Noor University

**Mojtaba Abbasi Ghadi**

PhD in Sociology, University of Tajik Academy of Sciences

**Mohammad Farhadi**

PhD in Political Science, University of Tajik Academy of Sciences

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### **Abstract**

#### **The purpose of the research:**

The aim of this research is to review and compare the indices of social development and tendency towards Radical Islam in Central Asia (a case study of ISIS or DAESH as a terrorist group).

#### **Statement of the problem:**

Social and cultural development within the framework of local and national values lead to self-esteem within the society and this process plays an important role in formation of social and cultural identity within the society. However, lack of attention to cultural and social developments as well as shortcomings of political and economic developments in Central Asian countries after the collapse of Soviet Union, which faced with a power vacuum, have been shaped in a variety of different ways; therefore this has led to the situation in which people resorted to their own historical and cultural identities. Lack of social and cultural developments affected the tendency towards Radical Islam in Central Asia. This process led to the situation that undermined the concept of nation-state and accelerated the appearance of radicalism and fundamentalism phenomena. On the other hand, Central Asian countries which have faced extensive social and cultural problems, have moved towards ethnic and nationalistic identities and with regard to the extensive social and cultural problems in the region, the process of identity-building has not been consistent with national and cultural values of the region and has moved it towards religious radicalism. Therefore, when nationalism couldn't fill the intellectual gap in Central Asia, radical Islamic

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\* E-mail: mdianat.pn@gmail.com (Corresponding author)

groups were able to attract people by using powerful advertising methods and public deceptions to persuade them that they are able to improve the quality of their lives.

The importance of this subject is laid in the following issues. First, the countries of the region are able to control this situation by trying to improve social development projects. Second, getting familiar with the plans of radical groups leads the countries of the region towards adopting appropriate measures and strategies. According to the above-mentioned subjects, the present research tries to explain the social development indices and the tendency of the region's citizen toward religious radicalism, especially DAESH terrorist group, by using sociological and socio-political approaches. Therefore, the main question of the research is that is there any difference between social development indices of the five commonwealth states - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizstan, and Tajikistan - and their tendency toward religious radicalism?

**Research question:**

Is there any difference between social development indices and tendency toward radical Islam in Central Asia? (Case study: DAESH)

**Research hypothesis:**

In order to answer the research question, one hypothesis is mentioned: there is a significant difference between social development indices of the Central Asian States from which DAESH recruited its members.

**Research methodology:**

The method of the present research is descriptive and correlative. The research data have been collected through quantitative methods and secondary analysis; the information was gathered from the economic development indices at the website of the Institute of International Studies which is based in Finland (2015).

**Research findings:**

The findings of this research indicate that from the five countries that have been studied, Kirghizstan with 7.1 percent, Tajikistan with 13.6 percent, Kazakhstan with 17.9 percent, Turkmenistan with 25.7 percent and Uzbekistan with 35.7 percent have recruited the lowest and highest warriors from DAESH respectively. In addition, according to inferential analysis, the findings of the research show that there is a significant difference between the social development indices of the countries from which DAESH recruited its members. The error level of this analysis was 0.01.

Furthermore, there is a significant difference between social development indices - such as social progress, health costs, net immigration, globalization,



and educational costs - within the five Central Asian countries from which DAESH recruited its members; error level of this analysis was also 0.01.

Therefore, according to the theoretical and empirical analyses of this research, we can say that after the collapse of communist ideology, internationalism and the national politics could not manage the plural Muslim societies in the region. Uneven development within the commonwealth countries - in different cultural, social, political, and economic aspects - reflected itself after the collapse of the Soviet Union and therefore the developmental weaknesses could not meet citizen needs. Meanwhile, due to the low level of social progress indices - such as providing basic needs, access to health and welfare, access to opportunities, and costs of education, health and treatment - the citizens of Central Asian countries have immigrated to other countries, especially Russia. This issue, accompanied by the situation created by free market and the expansion of globalization, has led to a bigger gap within these societies. In this connection, Islamic ideology which unites people regardless of their ethnic identities has been welcomed by many people in these countries. Therefore, the economic and social situations in the region, the inability of governments to solve the economic and social problems and also severe repressions, have led to the improvement of radicalism. This has created a condition in which religious extremist groups have been able to recruit its members from the discriminated populations.

**Keywords:** Central Asia, DAESH, Development, Globalization, Immigration, Kirghizstan, Radical Islam, Social Development Indices, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

## **Russian Foreign Policy Review Based on the Theory of Mersheimer about the Great Powers Policy (2012- 2018)**

**Elham Rasooli\***

Associate Professor of International Relations, Yazd University

**Saeed Attar**

Assistant Professor of Political Sciences, Yazd University

**Fatemeh Farsi**

M.A. in International Relations, Yazd University

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### **Abstract**

One of the most important goals of Russian foreign policy during Putin's presidency has been his attempt to revive and return to the superpower status of the Soviet Union era. Therefore Putin as the president of Russia has resorted to actions in foreign policy that have shown an attempt to increase the country's power and his willingness to represent Russia as hegemony in international relations. So, in this paper in order to understand Russian behavior in the field of foreign policy during Putin's presidency from 2012 to 2018 which is based on the theoretical framework of Mersheimer regarding the behaviors of great powers, we will examine and implement Putin's foreign policy on the basis of Mersheimer's indicators. The most important of these indicators are the strategy of war, alliance and coalition buildings, blackmailing, bloodletting, buck-passing and attempt to expand its hegemony in the region. Playing the role of External balance in other regions or attempts at regional hegemony, as well as increasing internal power, are other aspects of Russia's attempt to restore its previous role in the region.

According to Mersheimer, the anarchic structure of the international system creates a permanent security competition among great powers, so they are forced to adopt offensive behavior in order to maintain their survival. Since access to power is a prerequisite for their survival and security, governments consider using military tools to maximize their powers as a natural and justifiable phenomenon. That's why in international relations no power supports the current status quo but existing hegemony is determined to protect its upper level in comparison to its competitors. In this regard, if dissatisfied powers of the existing situation in international system

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\* E-mail: Rasooli@yazd.ac.ir (Corresponding author)

come to this conclusion that the balance of power can be realized at a reasonable cost in this way, they will use force. Merschimmer believes that all states are influenced by this logic and Russia is no exception to this rule.

At first, this study shows that Russia follows a local hegemonic supremacy by controlling and solving local critical issues such as Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh crises. By utilizing the strategy of war and annexation of Crimea, pursuing blackmail strategy and supporting East-Ukrainian separatists against Ukrainian government, as well as using bloodletting strategy with regard to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it has sought to consolidate its position in the region. In the next step, Russia tries to develop its influence in other zones to change the current status quo and dictate its policy. The obvious example of this can be seen in Russia's foreign policy behavior toward the West Asian region particularly in relation to the Syrian crisis. Russia's active presence in Syria has shown that the country along with its attention to the outside world has defined its long-term political, economic, security and geopolitical interests in the Middle East. Other steps in which the country has adopted are confronting Western bloc in the region to secure its interests and rebuild its weakened position. In this way, initially Russia sought to preserve and safeguard the survival of Bashar al-Assad regime by taking advantage of unity and coalition strategy and buck-Passing the shortcomings to its allies.

The next step was increasing its presence in Syria and as a result of this, under the pretext of fighting terrorism, it entered into the Syrian conflict directly. This was a clever imitation of pre-emptive war doctrine of the United States in (2001). Russia has been able to use the strategy of warfare calculation not only to reduce the United States options by direct military presence in Syria but also makes it harder to create a no-fly zone and prevent further advancement of terrorist groups in the country. It has also developed the Tartus and Latakia military sites in order to increase its military presence in this important region.

The findings of this research have also highlighted the issue that Russia is a dissatisfied player, so it tries to revive its previous position in international system. The United States has sought to achieve equal footings with Russia in the region by increasing its military presence

(as an internal balance). In this way, Russia uses all its capacities including military and economic means to show its strengths. In the context of boosting economic power, Kremlin has been trying to save Russia from the economic crisis that has plagued the country by adopting economic reforms and anti-sanction measures against Europe and the United States. Since a significant part of the Russian economy relies on energy resources, the country has been trying to take advantage of its hegemony in the field of oil and natural gas (hydrocarbon resources) and control energy corridors as a mean to advance its political and economic interests. Among other things, in order to increase its economic strength, efforts have been made to exploit the capacities of economic organizations, such as global trade and economic integration within the Eurasian Union.

According to the national security strategy documents in Russia it is essential for this country to strengthen its military capability. In this way, the country has been strengthening and boosting its ground forces, air Force and its navy. In terms of nuclear power, it is worth noting that the country not only has nuclear capability but also a superior capacity as a means of deterrence and credibility for its foreign policy.

This paper is a descriptive-analytic study based on adaptation of the theory of the case and the methods of collecting information are based on virtual resources and citation data.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, great Powers, Mersheimer, Putin, Russia.

## **Problematic Nature of Russia's Soft Power Discourse**

**Ahmad Rashidi\***

Associate Professor of Political Sciences, Mazandaran University

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### **Abstract**

Russian policymakers in pathology of their country's foreign policy have concluded that traditional policy was based on hard power but this policy is no longer in use in recent decades. Therefore in adjusting the new doctrine of foreign policy, the country offered a special place to soft power. In this framework, Russia tried to repair its internationally damaged status especially in countries such as Georgia and Ukraine, confronting the Color Revolutions and preserving pro-Russian regimes in its near abroad. Accordingly since 2007 the term of soft power gradually entered into the Russian foreign policy literature. With Putin's reelection in 2012, Russia showed more interest in adopting soft power in its foreign policy.

However, many analysts including Joseph Nye, the architect of the concept of soft power, argues that there is a wide gap between speech and action in Russia and that Russia has failed to achieve soft power. He believes that in Russia soft power policy is not based on private sector and independent civil society. According to Nye, Russia needs to turn its speech into action and use the talents and capabilities of its civil society. So, studying the issue to understand the nature of Russian soft power discourse requires a scientific research which is the main purpose of this article.

The paper which is in the framework of an interpretative and discursive approach focuses on the nature of Russian leaders understandings from the soft power perspective and seeks to theorize the process of change in perception of Russian leaders about soft power. From this point of view, this paper has an innovative purpose, so it can help to understand the dimensions and unknown angles of Russian soft power. The paper also seeks to answer these questions that how Russians have dealt with the concept of the soft power discourse in order to gain dignity and power and how the western hegemonic powers have affected their understanding of this term. The discourse is made in relation to the subject of "the other" and from this perspective; the West has an inevitable impact on the evolution of Russia's

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\* E-mail: a.rashidi@umz.ac.ir (Corresponding author)

soft power discourse. Therefore the hypothesis which has been articulated as an answer to the research main question is: dual great power identity of Russia that emerged in a complex relationship of love and hatred toward the western world led to dual identity of the Russian soft power discourse on the path of trying to gain dignity and influence in international arena. It means that the west perception of soft power is accepted by Russia as far as it is not being encountered by the Great - Power identity of Russia, its influence and prestige, but when Russia fails to accept the criteria of western soft power, it has turned to processing a discourse of soft power that has been opposed to the Western discourse. To analyze the issue, the concept of cultural hegemony has been chosen as theoretical framework of research.

The findings of the research show that Russian efforts to gain its status are based on the Great - Power dual identity of Russia which is shaped in its relations vis-a-vis the west. When Russia cannot gain dignity by recognition of western hegemonic discourse, it resorts to its pre- Great Power status in international system and consequently presents a different discourse of soft power in relation to the western hegemonic one. The wave of pessimism and criticism between Russia and the West and worsening of their relations reinforced this feeling among Russian elites that Russia's interests deliberately disregarded by the west and the continuation of this approach would lead to insecurity and harms to Russia. Accordingly, in order to secure Russia's national interests, they embarked to articulate a soft power discourse on geopolitical considerations and in opposition to the western discourse.

In this regard, the question is whether the latter aspect of Russia's soft power which is founded on the basis of political pragmatism and competition with the West could be recognized in the west and leads to gain its status. It is clear that the recognition of Russia's soft power by western countries depends on the types of Russian confrontation to the measures which hegemonic powers, namely liberal democracies have adopted. It also depends on the fact that the United States and other western countries have a tendency to moderate neo-liberal order to identify positions and interests of others. In order to adapt practical conformity with consideration of hegemonic powers and recognition of its status in this framework, Russia must make some social innovations that are acceptable to hegemonic powers.

Regarding the spike in the climate of mistrust between Russia and the West, it seems that the discourse of Russian soft power in current situation tends to be more inclined to confronting the West. In conclusion, Russian leaders are trying to bring together like-minded countries to counter the

Western hegemonic order and create a foundation for its soft power in future. Therefore, when Russian leaders deal with verbal attacks to discredit hegemonic powers and blame them for the failure of Russia's soft power, the possibility of its recognition by the hegemonic powers will become weak. Moreover, by considering the logic of vicious circle, it seems that competing aspects of Russian soft power discourse seem to persist with more predominance.

**Keywords:** Cultural Hegemony, Discourse, Great Power, Identity, Russia, Soft Power.

## **The Influence of Russian Identity Discourses in Finding Iran's Eurasian Role**

**Bahareh Sazmand\***

Associate Professor of Regional Studies, University of Tehran

**Hossein Suranari**

PhD in Regional Studies, University of Tehran

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### **Abstract**

The attitude and approach of Russia's encounter with Eurasian region has gone a long way in the post-Soviet era. The identity discourses of Russia including Westernism, Statism and Eurasianism in the post-Soviet era have determined the interpretation of Russian political system regarding Eurasia and Eurasian regionalism based on formation of a spiritual system. This topic beyond the endless process of adaptability of Russia's regional behavior with different spiritual systems and identity statements has led to a continuous review and re-listing of its rivals, colleagues and allies, especially in Eurasia. For example, due to the evolution of Russia's identical attitude towards Eurasia and regionalism approach, Iran's place in this category and the preference / not to cooperate with it has been repeatedly changed. Despite the differences in form, the instrumentalist rule of conduct with Iran has been the joint production of Russian identity discourses. This behavioral rule has been the result of a social learning of interactive process between prior identities and latent identity experiences. The following article is aimed at understanding the "role of Russian identity discourses in the Eurasian role of Iran", which seeks to verify the notion based on "the role of deterrence of these discourses on findings to verify Iran's Eurasian role".

Because of the proximity of the two countries with Eurasia, the conceptualizations of Russia's identity from Iran have been most influenced by the materialist-semantic process of the country's identity discourses. In other words, under the influence of this subject, some assumed roles have been defined for Iran such as the "South Threat", "Playing Card with the West", "a natural partner and ally against the common enemy", "a reliable and credible ally in the region and the world". In Russia's Eurasian politics, the construction has left behind an endless rupture. As a result, the lack of

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\* E-mail: bsazmand@ut.ac.ir (Corresponding author)



interests in relation to Iran and the preference / unwillingness of cooperation with it have been repeatedly transformed into different topics of debate. Specifically in Eurasian region all three discourses with differences in identity and political thoughts have preferred to adopt an instrumentalist approach to Iran.

This article tries to examine what has gone through the implementation of a critical constructivist approach, which focuses on the process of transforming the attitude of Russia's dual identity discourse into Iran-Eurasia. The main goal is to answer this question: "What role did Russia's identity discourses have during the post-Soviet era in Iran's function in Eurasia?" In response, the hypothesis will be tested that "Russia's identity discourses have played a deterrent role in the Eurasian role of Iran", will be tested. In this regard, the three dialectics of Westernism, Statism and Eurasianism (conservative and critical) in relation to Iran were studied. In terms of Westernism toward cooperation with Iran, there is a discrepancy between a priori and a posteriori identity. In fact, the late Western experience of Iran (such as the experience of Iran's constructive role in the Nagorno-Karabakh and Tajikistan crises and its non-intervention approach in the Chechnya crisis) has changed the cynical meanings of Iran (such as the Islamic / South threat) and has created the ground to cooperate with it. Regarding the state-oriented nature and the critical nature of Eurasianism, the proactive identity of Iran in relation to it confirms its pre-emptive identity. The two despite sharing somewhat discriminating meanings with the anti-Western identity in Iran, favored a "flexible, temporary, and instrumental" cooperation with Iran on the sustained and inseparable cooperation with the "power policy". Here one can also speak of the effect of latent experiences, but these experiences appear to have a stabilizing role, not a changeable one in the anti-Semitism of the discourses between Statism and critical Eurasianism. However, the conservative Eurasian type supports unity with Iran. But, as noted, this alliance is only against the common "western" threat in Eurasian region; it has been dealing with creation of the identity structures of "Eurasian civilization" and "the Russian world".

The inappropriateness of a priori and posterior identity look at Iran in the discourse of Westernism and the appropriateness of this in the two discourses of statism and Eurasianism were derived from the social learning of interactive processes simultaneously with the triples of the West-Eurasia-Iran. Russia's laws and rules of conduct have been developed with Iran. The result, in particular, in the Eurasian region has been the creation of an instrumentalist rule of law with Iran among all Russian identity discourses. This code of conduct has deprived the possibility of a process of

institutionalization of the Eurasian function of Iran. It seems that the Islamic Republic of Iran, because of its anti-Western / anti-American identity and its institutional isolation, has accepted the politics of inhibiting production structures in Russian identity discourses on its Eurasian dedication and against the acquisition of Russia's support and cooperation in the international arena and its foreign policy priorities namely, the Middle East favored the "insignificance" of the "active role" in the Eurasian region. At the same time, it is not possible to speak of Eurasia's "complete passivity" and "stagnation" toward Iran. Iran has acted as an intermediary in ending some of the region's conflicts and has resisted the Caspian Sea littoral states demands in reaching its proportional share. But the point is that, in contrast to other regional and global actors (China, Turkey, the United States and the European Union) which have been able to expand their sphere of influence and interests in "unnecessary conditions of Russia" Iran has succeeded in advancing some of its innovative regionalization policies but has not found regional capability in the "Need for Russia's conditions". As a result, Iran's participation in the existing Eurasian regionalism has had little achievement and the new regionalism initiative of the country, such as the formation of the organization of the Caspian Sea littoral states, the convergence of Persian-speaking countries, and the plan to establish "Nowruz International Foundation" have not been successful.

**Keywords:** Eurasian Regionalism, Eurasianism, Identity Discourses, Iran, Russia, Statism, Westernism.

## **The Place of Looking at the East Discourse in Changing Iran's Foreign Policy Approach by Emphasizing on the Geopolitical Genome of Russia**

**Hadi Sayyadi**

PhD Student of Political Science, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Central Branch

**Ardeshir Sanaei\***

Assistant Professor of International Relations, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Central Branch

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### **Abstract**

One of the priorities of Iran's foreign policy according to the 20-year vision plan is to achieve regional superiority. In spite of the potentials that have made achieving this goal possible, there are some limitations to obtain it. One of these challenging barriers is the structure of the international system and the regional sub-systems that the Islamic Republic of Iran needs to achieve in order to attain this superior position. The geopolitical genome as a geopolitical map of politics is based on the geography of a country and its ability to influence other countries foreign policy. Geopolitics evaluates the global and regional power base on natural geography, in other words on the geographic plan of interaction and in the policy field. It establishes a relationship between power and goals. The geopolitical genome is a geographic map of the country's politics that has a significant impact on the behavior of political systems in the international system. Just as humans operate in accordance with their genetic mapping, they also direct genetic codes to other countries. If the geopolitical genome is able to be related to the national interests of a country with the geographical advantages of other countries, it is interdependence. The philosophy of international engagement, development and evolution of global system which allows politicians to take advantage of geographical location of the land, the strategic sensitivities of the sea, land and scarce economic, energy and water resources make regional and global political dominance of power, workable. Iran has a remarkable position with 15 neighboring countries in this geostrategic region. The country is potentially one of the most influential and powerful countries in

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\* E-mail: ardeshir\_sanaie@yahoo.com (Corresponding author)

the world. As foreign policy and government performance are affected by the geopolitical environment and requires the establishment of interaction in a set of spatial and temporal behaviors, the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite having a unique strategic position, lacks a desirable position in international system and is facing increasing external threats. This research aims to study geopolitical factors influencing the change in Iran's foreign policy from the west to the east with an emphasis on Russia. The author, using a descriptive-analytical method, is trying to answer this question that what geopolitical factors have changed Iran's foreign policy perspectives from the west to the east especially in relation between Iran and Russia during 1991 to 2016? The hypothesis of the research is: the geopolitical factors of Iran, the structure of the international system, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the change of Iran's position in the region, the discourses of Iran's foreign policy, the logic of politics and the pressure of Western sanctions in various fields against Iran have changed the attitude of foreign policy discourses of Iran from the west to the east between 1991 and 2016 which resulted in establishment of special ties between Iran and Russia. In spite of some different interests, relations with Russia became one of the most important foreign policy aspects of Iran at three levels: bilateral, regional and international.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, Genome, Geopolitics, Iran, Looking at the East, Russia.

## **Iran's Smart Power Analysis in Afghanistan after the US-led Invasion in 2001**

**Hadi Tolouei\***

PhD in Political Sciences, Tarbiat Modares University

**Mohammad Shafieefar**

Assistant Professor of Political Sciences, University of Tehran

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### **Abstract**

The Taliban's rule in Afghanistan has been the source of many ideological, political and security challenges for Iran. Therefore in the wake of Taliban's fall, the Islamic Republic gained diverse opportunities in the field of foreign policy. This opportunity happened on October 7, 2001, following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. A fanatical and tyrannical government collapsed in Afghanistan and various tribes and religious groups of Afghans found the opportunity to engage in socio-political life. From the time of its creation, the Taliban was one of the main threats to the Islamic Republic. The invasion of the United States to Afghanistan in 2001 removed the group from the political scene in Afghanistan and opened the way for Iran to establish ties with new Afghan government. The new Iranian policy can be analyzed on a smart power scale (a combination of soft and hard power). Due to the cultural nature of the Islamic Revolution and its patterns for Muslim countries, attention to smart power issue is necessary.

Given Iran's great civilization, historical and cultural backgrounds, the formation of the Islamic State terrorist group (ISIS) and the rule of democratic values within the framework of religion, the country has both the soft and hard powers to advance its foreign policy. In this regard, Afghanistan has a variety of platforms to enable Iran's smart power but the presence of Western forces in the form of the NATO-led alliance in Afghanistan has been a threat to the Islamic Republic of Iran. This article seeks to highlight the history of Iran-Afghanistan relations during the Taliban era and describe the power and influence of the Islamic Republic in Afghanistan after the occupation of the country by Western troops. The main question of research is how the US invasion of Afghanistan created opportunities and challenges in terms of smart power for Iran's foreign

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\* E-mail: htolouei66@gmail.com (Corresponding author)

policy? The research hypothesis suggests that in the context of establishment of new government in Afghanistan, Iran's soft power has grown significantly in terms of good relations with this country, by participating in its reconstruction and supporting the influence of the Shiites and its historical and cultural ties with Afghan people. The presence of NATO-led forces in Afghanistan, the Afghan government's tendency toward the United States and the West and diminished Islamic bonds between the two countries have created challenges for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran took a dual stance to the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 attacks. On the one hand it analyzed the invasion as an opportunity to defeat the Taliban; An enemy that had threatened the identity and national security of the Islamic Republic, so the country supported the fall of the Taliban. On the other, according to its historical relations with the United States, Iran viewed American troops presence in Afghanistan as a threat to its national security because the invasion of US-led forces to Afghanistan was a threat to Iran for three reasons:

1. US military presence was close to Iran eastern borders.
2. The NATO'S expansion to the East.
3. Expanding its domination and siege of the region's energy resources.
4. To operationalize the Greater Middle East plan.

On this basis, Iran spoke with a moral policy of the oppression of the Afghan people. Iran's strategy in Afghanistan was based on a partnership effort to reach to a political consensus in Kabul and balance of interests between ethnic, religious and various politico-military groups. To this end, Iran supported the United Nations and the international community initial steps to resolve the country's political conflicts. In this regard, establishing good relations between the two countries, Iran's participation in reconstruction of Afghanistan, maintaining its influence on Shiite sects and creating cultural and social ties with Afghans were the main objectives of the country to advance its smart power in Afghanistan.

Despite common identity and historical elements in Iran and Afghanistan, relations between the two countries have been challenged in recent years. According to some experts, the military presence and political influence of the United States in Kabul, the development of poppy cultivation and fragility of Afghan security are deterrents and negative factors in expanding relations between the two countries. Be having presence in Afghanistan as one of Iran's neighbors, the United States can put more pressure on the Islamic Republic. Establishing a military base in Afghanistan is also considered a serious threat to Iran. On the other hand, the potential of the tribal groups and people who live in both frontiers and ethnic and religious

differences in Afghanistan will cause divisions within Iran. In energy field, the United States has removed Iran from exporting its hydrocarbon resources to the international markets (by not allowing the country to be connected to the Central Asian pipelines) and has prevented improving relations of other countries with it.

In internal policy issues of Afghanistan, after several years, Iran showed its satisfaction with the Tajik government officials. The policy of support to Borhaneddin Rabbani and his followers, led Afghanistan Shiites to be disillusioned with Iran. In current situation, many reports by Afghan and American officials regarding relationship between Iran and the Taliban are being rejected by Iranian officials. Iran is also strongly opposed to the signing of a security pact between Afghanistan and the United States. It can be said that the level of political cooperation with the Shiites has been diminished due to the diversity in Iranian foreign policy apparatus. The Islamic republic of Iran, by supporting state-building process in Afghanistan prefers to communicate with those Shiite or Sunni groups that have nationalistic and anti-western inclinations. Another point is that Iran's encounter with Shiite immigrants has been nationalized and has become the topic of international regulations, rather than religious ideals. For this reason, Iran has been somewhat erased from their minds as the Kiblah of Afghanistan Shiites. The wave of growing dissatisfaction with Iran, which has been raised in recent years in connection with immigration policies, has caused Shiite clerics of Afghanistan to reconsider their relationship with Iran.

However, Iran is still looking to create a good image among Afghans. In this regard, the country's goal is to maintain friendly ties with Afghanistan central government and prevent the Taliban from returning to power and minimize the presence and influence of Western troops in the country. Iran's efforts to reconstruction and development of Afghanistan have been focused in eastern parts of the country. Iran is also seeking to expand its influence in the capital Kabul in addition to the border areas. It has established and opened consulates in six major cities such as Herat, Kandahar and Mazari-Sharif. These issues are important because the Islamic Republic of Iran is moving beyond Western-imposed regional isolation and the country's efforts to attract Afghan public opinion should be increased.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, America, Foreign Policy, Iran, Smart Power.

## **Geopolitical Developments and Afghanistan's Foreign Policy; 1919- 2001**

**Farhad Atai**

Professor of International Relations, University of Tehran

**Mohammad Musa Jafari\***

PhD in International Relations, University of Tehran

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### **Abstract**

A century after independence, Afghanistan's independence in formulating and implementing its foreign policy is a topic of debate. Ever since its independence in 1919, the country has been directly influenced by great power rivalries and geopolitical and security dynamics in the region. This paper examines the effects of geopolitical developments in the region on Afghanistan's foreign policy. Four periods can be distinguished in Afghanistan's foreign policy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, each period shaped by the necessities of changing region's geopolitics, vis-à-vis great powers, as viewed by Afghan policymakers. The first was during the reign of the kings - from king Amanullah Khan in 1919 to Mohammed Zahir Shah in 1973. The second period involved republican regimes, the presidency of Mohammed Daoud Khan 1973- 1978. The third period was the time when the communist regime was in power, from Nur Muhammad Taraki in 1978 to Mohammad Najibullah in 1992. Finally, it was the 1990s civil war and the rise of the Taliban. Afghanistan geopolitical region in the twentieth century changed in three phases. The first stage was between the two world wars when geopolitics was in transition; Russia, Great Britain and Germany were competing in the region. After the Second World War till 1991, the geopolitics of region was influenced by the balance of power between the Soviet Union and the United States. After the collapse of Soviet Union, once again, there was a transformation in the region's geopolitics. Balancing and bandwagoning were two main strategies of Afghanistan foreign policy. Saul B. Cohen's theory of the global system is used as the theoretical framework in this study. As a quasi-independent state, Afghanistan has been an interesting case for study in the geopolitics of the region, both during the stability and transitional periods. Throughout these times, Afghanistan

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\* E-mail: jafarij@alumni.ut.ac.ir (Corresponding author)



foreign policy has tended to be neutral, adopting a balanced strategy in its relations with great powers which were present in the region. Whenever there was a deviation from this strategy, coup d'états, upheavals, or foreign occupation have followed. In the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack, as George Bush's so-called "New World Order" emerged, Kabul's alignment with the United States increased, indicating the influence of the prominent position of the United States in the geopolitics of the region. In this article each period will be studied and observed separately in two cases; geopolitics of the region and Afghanistan foreign policy.

The research is organized in three sections. The first section is statement of the problem, reviewing the existing literature and related concepts. The theoretical framework is organized in two parts. In the second section, the focus of the research is on the development of Afghanistan foreign policy and geopolitics of the region. The last part includes examination of Afghanistan foreign policy in twentieth century in light of geopolitical developments of the region.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Appeasement, Foreign Policy, Geopolitics, Heartland, The Soviet Union.

## **Reflection of Political and Social Developments in Soviet and Russian Cinema**

**Zahra Mohammadi\***

Assistant Professor of Russian Language and Literature, University of Tehran

**Tahereh Solgi**

M.A. in Russian Studies, University of Tehran

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### **Abstract**

Andreas Bazin says: “Cinema is timid because its main element is life itself”. This article reviews and analyzes the features of Russian films from 1970 to 2010. In this paper, we try to answer this question whether the political transformations and leadership of the government have always influenced both Soviet and Russian cinema. How the political and social transformations in every decade have affected culture, art, including the cinema? The hypothesis of the research is that Soviet and Russia’s cinema have presented their cinematic arts and culture with respect to the ruling politics. For a better understanding of the cinema during 1970s to 2010, featuring the films of this era which has helped the research has been analyzed. Contents and semantic analysis of films during the given period have been examined in order to obtain a better understanding and measurable results. The theoretical framework of the research is based on the theory of “Pierre Sorlin” that the cinema is the essence of a society. With the study of analysis made by comparing the cinematic films of the 1970s, it seems that the main contents of most films in these periods have undergone political and social changes.

Russia’s cinema has never become a global one despite its numerous potentials. In the most active decades of Russian cinema life, the domination of the Soviet government expected cinema to be an honest representation of the Soviet man. The state-building of art, which began in Stalin tenure, had a major impact on cinema as one of the most influential artworks. The government defined a series of expectations for artists in which art was needed to create the ideal face of an ideal Soviet man. For this reason, the films of the 1950s and 60s, under the influence of Stalinist policies, followed

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\* E-mail: zahra\_mohammadi@ut.ac.ir (Corresponding author)

the idealism and idealization of the Soviet people who lived in communist Soviet Union and served only the community. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Soviet political system was changed.

Previously the government policies were reflected in the Russian cinema and merged with art, especially cinema and literature. For example, you can refer to the directive of the Soviet government in 1920. According to the decree, the basic criterion for assessing the artistic quality of the films was to be presented in a way that can be understood by millions of people. Lenin and Stalin were well aware of the value of educational propaganda and cinema. During the Soviet time, films screening were held. The purpose of the screening was to consolidate the power of communists in the Soviet republics through description of heroic proletarian struggle, which made the difficulties sweet and convinced the victory in the civil war for the revolutionary cause.

A few years later in 1928, the Communist Party Congress issued a decree on subjects regarding the cinema and its products, according to which films should avoid formalism. The wave of empiricism that the Soviet cinema gave way to socialist realism by overthrowing the aesthetics of the world of cinema: that is, to represent life as it would be. Art grew dramatically during this period. Soviet cinema also gained great achievements. The technological equipment of cinema and the style of filmmaking and innovations of the great Soviet filmmakers were remarkable. The issue of national identity is one of the issues that has always been important to Russia and has not lost its importance so far. That's why we paid attention to the issue of identity in Russian cinema and it was examined during the soviet rule.

In 1960s, Russian cinema was introduced to the world and it was already on the path of progress. Khrushchev's cultural policies turned the films of the 1970s and 80s into a special phenomenon that clearly reflected the social relations of that era. The heroes of the films of the 1970s and 80s find the inner world, while the audiences in the 1950s and 60s witnessed the heroes of machines serving the progress of society. The bitter and naked cinema of the Perestroika era - was criticized for blaming the blackout - recorded films such as: *Brother, Deaf, Snipers, and Robbers* in the history of Russian art, a clear reflection of a society on the verge of collapse. The sudden release of Soviet art which was on the brink of collapse also affected the cinema of the 1990s, and many social uncertainties were displayed more obscure than ever.

In the first decade of the twenty first century, Russian cinema hosted Hollywood movie films and tried to keep this path resolute. By changing the post-Soviet art, the artists approach also changed and cinema started to consider selling films. The Russian version of the American dream is visible

in new Russian films. But the concern of social pathology and the making or returning to Russian identity is still visible in some modern Russian films. The semantic cinema of Russia can confirm this claim. Government support for films adapted from literary works and historical events to production of durable films in this area. Russia's cinema has undergone a transition and it is hoped that there will soon be traces of less non-Russian identity. In recent years, most state-owned investments have been made in film making with historical themes that are aimed at strengthening Russian national identity. Such films have been welcomed among all classes of society.

**Keywords:** Content Analysis, Individual Identity, National Identity, Russian Cinema, Social Collapse.

## **Water Diplomacy and Water Disputes in the Central Asian Region**

**Seyyed Ali Mahmoudi\***

Associate Professor of International Relations, International Relations  
School of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Hamed Hekmat Ara**

M.A. Student of Regional Studies, International Relations School of  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran

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### **Abstract**

Water plays an important role in Central Asia. This area is more than 4 million square kilometers of breadth which includes Post-Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan and covers more than Indian Subcontinent's breadth and has a population of about 60 million people. Due to the fact that Central Asian is located in a dry and semi-arid belt, agriculture would be possible through irrigation and it is not expected to produce dried crops. As a result, artificial water distribution systems are needed. In the late nineteenth century with the conquest of all parts of Central Asia by the Russian Empire, new water distribution systems for flax production were carried out on a wider scale than in comparison with the past. As a result the seemingly endless Central Asian Water Resources began to decline from 1960s when the rapid increase in demand for water started by drainage of rivers and reducing groundwater resources, as well as degradation of water and soil quality. The drying of "Aral Lake" is also the result of the same Water Management policies that were adopted during the Soviet Era.

Agriculture is a reasonable point for Central Asian Economy and products such as flax and rice need plenty of water and irrigation. In addition, irrigation systems in the area have been severely eroded; so half of the water resources never flow to the farm lands and goes to spits. Several years of drought has also taken place in the area and is still likely to happen again. But due to political and economic rivalries between the countries of the region, they have not been able to agree on a replacement system instead of the Soviet Era Water Resources Management System. After the collapse

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\* E-mail: mahmoudi3000@gmail.com (Corresponding author)

of the Soviet Union in 1991, the change in natural resources management in each Central Asian Autonomous Republics occurred. The result of this historic event was the rivalry over water resources which were alarmingly increasing in the region and were leading to potential tensions in Central Asian republics. Therefore the political climate became tense. Water Pricing will save this problem. In Central Asian Region, water should be distributed with market prices by eliminating water subsidies which was a legacy of the Soviet Union era.

In Central Asia, given that most of the region's water surfaces originate from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the two countries apply stringent water abstraction systems while the downstream countries which include Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, naturally feel threatened by the two upstream countries and try to counter the threats. But the disagreements that exist between the downstream countries on water distribution prevent these countries from uniting and cooperating with each other against the upstream countries. In fact, all countries of Central Asian Region feel threatened by each other and choose their allies from trans-region. As Kazakhstan and Russia, both worried about Uzbekistan's threats (Kazakhstan is competing with Uzbekistan and Russia over the leadership of the region due to its lack of presence in Uzbekistan) and united with each other.

The main question of the article is why Water Diplomacy between the countries of Central Asian states, despite cultural, linguistic, religious and geographical proximities with each other, has not been successful so far, that these countries have adopted less cooperative regional approaches to water issues and each one seeks to find trans-regional allies? The answer to this question based on "Defensive Realism Theory" is that the issue of water along with ethnic and border disputes have become a security issue in relations between the countries of Central Asia, because of the threat they feel from each other and seek to find trans-regional allies which have common benefits for them. Therefore, due to the fact that Water Diplomacy in Central Asian Region is not inherent in origin and is influenced by border and ethnic disputes, as a result, it has not been successful in resolving regional conflicts.

Regarding the dependence of most Central Asian states economy to common and trans-boundary waters, the issue of Water Management is of a great importance in the region. Water Diplomacy in Central Asia after the independence of the countries of the region in February 1992 was manifested in the framework of an "Almaty Agreement" between all Central Asian states which demanded maintenance of allocation of Water Resources from the Soviet time. In 2008, Kazakhstan's president as a downstream country,

as well as Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan Presidents, as upstream countries agreed on a plan of exchanging water and energy; But Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which were dependent on Water Resources of upstream countries, demanded the maintenance of the Almaty Agreement and their previous status in the Soviet era and did not attend the meeting. The reason for Kazakhstan's agreement is the large breadth of the country and its lack of dependence to "Syr Darya". Of course, with the change of ruling government in Uzbekistan, the country has welcomed negotiations on water resources and even supported the development of water facilities in Tajikistan.

The downstream countries of Central Asian Region including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were defined by agriculture in the Soviet era due to their fertile lands; so much of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan's water was transferred to these countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Based on Defensive Realism Theory, all states seek to preserve their past position and their main behavior in foreign policy is the balance of threats against those states that threaten their position. Although all of downstream countries in the region feel threatened by upstream countries in the context of water, there are some disagreements among these countries. They cannot unite against a common threat and in fact no kind of strong cooperation agreement at the level of the Central Asian Region can be formed among them. Therefore, the countries of the region are looking for trans-regional allies and the disagreement over common water resources (due to the regional water crisis) alongside ethnic and border disputes have become one of the main reasons for the divergence of the countries of the Central Asian Region.

**Keywords:** Central Asia, Common Water Resources, Trans-boundary Rivers, Water Diplomacy, Water Disputes.

## **Comparative Study of Iran and Turkey Media Diplomacy toward Central Asia and the Caucasus**

**Seyyed Hassan Mirfakhraei\***

Associate Professor of International Relations, Allameh Tabataba'i  
University

**Majid Firouzmandi Bandpey**

M.A. in Central and the Caucasus Studies, Allameh Tabataba'i University

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### **Abstract**

Today public opinion of societies is considered as a very important and influential issue in government policy making. This has led each country to pursue its own policy in order to influence other countries in choosing policies consistent with it. In this context, public diplomacy seems to be the most practical approach. The process of transformation and diversity of diplomacy has grown considerably from the globalization process in terms of structure, agenda and practices over the last decade. Undoubtedly, one of the most important types of diplomacy in the world today is media diplomacy which means strategic planning of a government to influence public opinion of other countries and media diplomacy should be a consequence of the importance of public opinion in the field of international equations and the significant improvement in capacity of citizens to influence decisions. Governments know today the situation in the world is very different from the past and the citizens of countries are stakeholders who enjoy undeniable right to information and want to participate actively in political decision-making and community management.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and its division into several states, Central Asian region and the Caucasus became very important for various regional and trans-regional powers for variety of reasons, namely: communication, economy, energy and security. In terms of its cultural, civilization, identity and ethnic structure, the region is similar to the two neighboring countries: The Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey, which has found a very special place in foreign policy orientations of the two countries. Today the countries of the region have the right to influence beyond their borders and behave like independent players because of their past history, as

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\* E-mail: for501520@yahoo.com (Corresponding author)



well as the former Soviet communist politics, which had kept them as dependent and unstructured states. One of the most important demands of Iran and Turkey in foreign policy is to become regional power and extend their own ideologies (Iran is following the propagation of Islamic Revolution ideology and Turkey is following the ideology of pan-Turkism) which is the best place for above-mentioned countries policy propaganda. Accordingly, the present research is an attempt to study the comparative study of media diplomacy between Iran and Turkey in Central and East Central Asian region. The main question of the research is that what is the media diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey in Central Asia and the South Caucasus? In response to this question, using the conceptual framework of media diplomacy, the research hypothesis is that Iran's media diplomacy is based on audio-visual media and government organs and Turkey's diplomacy is based on private organizations and television programs.

Iranian media which focus on Central Asia are normally assisted and coordinated by the state. The main means in this area are all under the control of the Government of the Islamic Republic, which has enabled the regional states and foreign powers to look at the threats to Iranian propaganda and to prevent Iran's influence in the region. Iran's public diplomacy has been mainly based on Internet media.

Another important factor behind the failure of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Central Asia, is the great concentration of its foreign policy to the Middle East; in the same way Iran's overseas television networks have focused their attentions to Middle East and networks such as Al-Alam, Al-Kawthar, Sahar TV and Arabic films have entirely focused their attention on Arab populations and have been successful in recent years regarding Islamic awakening, the so-called Arab spring and Middle Eastern crises but we have not seen any particular performance in this area. In the radio section, Iran has several specialized networks on Central Asian region and the Caucasus, all of which broadcasting programs and news related to the language of the countries of the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran has not yet been able to launch a comprehensive real image of itself through its networks in the target region. In Iran, two Press TV and Hispanic TV networks have been launched for a specific audience at the international level.

The third factor behind Iran's failures in Central Asia and the Caucasus is the lack of attention to the existing capacities in Iran and the region as a whole, the most important of which are common language and common history, which in the media field are the two important elements that could influence in the region's policy making process. Turkey has been very active

in the field of media diplomacy in Central Asia and the Caucasus and has launched several public, private and satellite TV channels in the region. Even the Turkish radio, broadcasts some programs in Armenian language (TAR-Radio has a part in Armenian). By making historic series such as Sri Lanka, Turkey has been looking for a new kind of Ottomanism which has attracted world political thinkers attention and highly elevated Turkey's stance in this regard. The country is also developing strands of culture and lifestyles that is eager to expand its living styles in the world, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

By combining its governmental and non-governmental organizations and activities under the umbrella of Turkey, the country has been able to achieve its goals by adopting specific policies like Ottomanism and the use of propagation of Turkish values to achieve its cultural, economic and political goals in the region. It has introduced itself as one of the strategic allies of the region, attracting both the public and communities, as well as among the statesmen in Central Asian region.

Iran will receive cooperation with the countries of the region with open arms. Joint history, common elites, common language and shared values provide Iran with best opportunities to use its media and related industries to advance its media diplomacy in the region. But in practice, it has relied on the same number of government networks, sites and news agencies. On the other hand, Turkey, which has some commonalities with Iran, has been able to establish close ties with the countries of the region through a number of both private and public NGOs.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Identity, Media, Media Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy.

## **Iran, Russia and Eurasian Integration; Benefits of Active Regionalism**

**Alireza Noori\***

Assistant Professor of Regional Studies, Shahid Beheshti University

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to discuss the dimensions and benefits of Iran's participation in Eurasian integration process in cooperation with Russia. Regionalism is seen as a mechanism for accelerating the development process through the use of other countries resources and capacities, reducing costs, providing more benefits and effectively addressing threats. Among different regions, Eurasia has been discussed more than ever in different kinds of international literatures and theories of regionalism. One of main reasons for the importance of this region is the transition of world order to a new one. The United States and Russia's "pivot to Asia" strategy and at the same time China's "look to the West" are evident signs of further importance of this region in perspectives of international relations. Despite the theoretical emphasis in Iran, practical attention has not yet been given to Eurasia and the integration process in this region. Lack of objective look at trends and benefits, inadequate understanding of capacities, lack of Eurasian strategy and the follow-up policy to constructed process are main reasons for this failure. Meanwhile, attention great powers role in Eurasia is also important. Russia, which still views Central Eurasia as its traditional sphere of influence, seeks to preserve its interests, security, decisive and defining roles in the region. Therefore, there is no possibility to ignore Russia as a game player in Eurasia at least in the medium term.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to answer the question of how Iran-Russia relations are shaping in Eurasian regionalism. What are the capacities and interests of the two parties to cooperate in this region? What are the opportunities and obstacles for mutual co-operation? And what is its outlook? On the other hand, Russia's emphasis on Iran's positive role in Eurasian politics, Tehran's willingness to cooperate with Russia in the region accompanied by practical steps, including cooperation to build the North-South corridor are evidence of positive approach of the two countries

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\* E-mail: ar\_noori@sbu.ac.ir

to cooperate with each other in Eurasia. So, the main hypothesis is that although in current situation, full Eurasian integration between Iran and Russia is not possible but the two countries can interact in regional structures in the form of confederative/sovereignty-partnership to provide more benefits and fight threats at a lower cost.

Among the most important motivations for Tehran and Moscow to cooperate in the “Great Eurasia” scene are the followings: relative common regional views on various political, economic and security issues; synergistic capacities as influential actors in regional and trans-regional areas; separate capacities to geographically and thematically balance each other foreign policy; desire to extend cooperation from one region to another (Middle East and Eurasia); geopolitical reciprocal needs to deter against US and its allies destabilizing attempts to influence in the region, common benefit in maintaining stability in Central Eurasia including readiness against the threats posed from Afghanistan; the geo-economic necessities of interaction including in transit and security fields, necessities in dealing with asymmetric threats especially terrorism, drug trafficking and extremism.

This paper studies the issue with a futuristic view and deductive-analytical approach to theory and performance of Tehran and Moscow in cooperation and integration in the Greater Eurasia. It is emphasized that Eurasia is a dynamic region in regionalization of international relations and through its resources and capacities will have an important place in the new world order. Transformation in concepts of hegemony and great power, as well as profit-oriented rather than value-oriented approaches, will provide a suitable platform for the concerned countries including Iran to selective integration in Eurasia.

As a result, this paper emphasizes multi-dimensional benefits for Iran’s participation in Eurasian integration such as diversification of foreign partners, interacting with Eurasian powers (China and Russia); using institutional and organizational capacities of the Eurasia; geopolitically balanced foreign policy, fixing the problem of over-focusing on the Middle East; thematically balance foreign policy, fixing the problem of overemphasis on security and political issues through giving more attention to economic issues in Eurasia; using Eurasian space to economize foreign policy (reducing sanctions pressure); mutually beneficial geo-economic exchanges (especially in areas of energy and transit); responding to the need for multilateral engagement in interrelated world order through integration in Eurasia; possibility of generalizing the power received from Eurasia to international arena. It is stated that active foreign policy in Eurasian vector requires a thorough understanding of Eurasia’s position in future

international order, internal consensus on a strategy, adopting a multi-vector approach and balanced engagement with all parties involved in integration process, interacting with Moscow as a pivotal actor of this process at least in the medium term, avoiding unnecessary emphasis on variables such as “West”, “Russia” and “China” and at the same time trying to participate in defining regional trends.

**Keywords:** Eurasia, Great Eurasia, Integration, International Order, Iran, Regionalism, Regionalization, Russia.

## **Concluding EU- Georgia Free Trade Agreement (Opportunities and Challenges for the Islamic Republic of Iran)**

**Roxana Niknami\***

Assistant Professor of Regional Studies, University of Tehran

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### **Abstract**

Georgia is the connecting point of the South Caucasus region to the North on the one hand and Russia and the Caucasus to Eastern and Central Europe, on the other. The Black Sea is located in western Georgia, which plays an important role in geopolitical matters in the region. Georgia has three important ports in this sea; the most important one is the port of Poti. In terms of geo-space, Georgia is the main source of access to the Black Sea, being in equations of the east corridor to the west and from the south to the north, also acting as a balance of power between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey and Iran and the strategic stratagem of Russia, Europe and the United States. Contrary to what is shown in the media, Iran hasn't had significant economic achievements in Georgia.

After the signing of JCPOA (joint comprehensive plan of action) or Iran nuclear deal, a new era of economic relations between Iran and Georgia began. One of the motivating factors for investing in Georgia was the close relationship between Georgia and the European Union. In 2014, "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement" was signed between the European Union and Georgia and since then, Georgia has benefited from concessions in economic relations with the European Union. According to some of the provisions of this agreement, Europeans considered concessions for another government in Georgia.

The question is how conclusion of this agreement will provide opportunities for the Islamic Republic of Iran to advance its economic policies in Georgia and whether it could lead to a greater proximity to Iran and Europe. There are many capacities to expand Iran-Georgia ties in economic spheres. In the meantime the European Union seems to be able to bring about closer regional cooperation.

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\* E-mail: [niknami.roxana@ut.ac.ir](mailto:niknami.roxana@ut.ac.ir)

In response to the above-mentioned question, it can be said that the clauses on free tariffs export, the rules of origin and the visa liberalization with Europe included in this agreement provide great opportunities for Iran and could increase the level of relations between Iran and Georgia on the one hand and improve relations between Iran and the European Union on the other. This cooperation has occurred in energy and transportation sectors.

In the first case, it can be said that Iran and Georgia have a special geopolitical position. The geographical location of Iran between the Caspian Sea and Oman Sea, the location of Georgia along the Black Sea and the fact that both of these states are transit routes for Europe and have great potential to develop three-way partnerships, are of paramount importance. Iran is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of oil and gas reserves, and the EU as one of the largest industrial poles in the world is strongly dependent on imports of energy resources. Georgia also is in need of new energy resources to complete its independency from Russia. On the other hand, oil, gas and other derivatives account for the bulk of the Iranian export market which has led the country to depend heavily on foreign exchange earnings from the sale of these products. Despite the huge reserves of Iran and its geographical proximity to the European Union, energy exchanges are not at the right level. Therefore, there is three-way sensitivity in the field of energy and transit between Iran, Georgia and the European Union.

According to liberal-political theories, regional agreements can open the way for the further expansion of economic cooperation. This is the policy pursued by the EU in its economic diplomacy. European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership Program were important steps in active participation of Europe in the South Caucasus region and particularly in Georgia, which led to the conclusion of a cooperation agreement with the country. This paper has used interdependency theory for the hypothesis examination.

Currently good relations between Iran and Europe has provided the ground for effective Iranian presence in Georgia and can act as a major barrier (contributor) to the pressures of the United States and Russia and give Georgia a backing for deepening its ties with Iran. The concept of sensitivity in three-way relationship between Iran, Georgia and the European Union can be useful for all three sides. The concept of susceptibility is a healthy relationship in Georgia and the capacity for this three-sided sensitivity is fortunate. The reading of theory of interdependence means that among the countries with a high degree of bilateral trades, if trade value is not sensitive to price and income developments in the two countries, they will have limited economic dependence.

After the signing of JCPOA, EU confirmed Iran's key role in the Caucasus. There is no doubt that cultural ties between Iran and Georgia can contribute to further development of relations but this will not be achieved without more dynamic economic relations between the two countries. Europe is the catalyst that provides more dynamism. Friendship with the EU is a key factor in increasing Iran's presence in Georgia. Iran has the capacity to play a key role in geopolitics of the Caucasus including Georgia. With Europe's support, Iran will look more as a reliable player. The historical and cultural commonalities between Iran and Georgia, the decline of Russia's influence in Georgia, the involvement of Europeans in issues related to Georgia and Iran as a dynamic actor are the most important means for promoting bilateral and trilateral relations. In addition, Iran could benefit from the dynamics of the deep-rooted bilateral engagement with Georgia and EU.

**Keywords:** DCFTA, Energy, European Union, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran, South Caucasus, Transit Corridor.