

## **Analysis of the Socio-Political Context of Daesh's Presence in Central Asia (from the Threat of Infiltration to the Reality of Presence)**

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### **Abstract**

The Central Asian region, with a significant population of Muslims, has, as part of the Islamic world, embraced various Islamic currents and movements that have always been of particular importance to the political and social developments in the region. Today in this region, some Islamic groups and movements act as an opposition to their current governments, and while challenging their legitimacy, are demanding a fundamental change in the status quo; although they have different ways of achieving this goal. The spread of the ideology of secularism, liberalism, and Western culture, and the lack of social justice as well as the obvious political and economic discrimination in Central Asia are all among the key factors that have led to issues such as a crisis of legitimacy and an efficiency crisis in these countries, and provides grounds for popular uprisings and radical actions, based on Islamic ideas. The existence of some political and economic problems and the ineffectiveness of political systems in these areas and also the emergence of many problems among Islamic parties and groups that often have extremist and terrorist practices, shows the prospect that the ground for the infiltration and expansion of the activities of fundamentalist and radical groups such as ISIS in these areas has been provided. Also by exploiting the situation in the area, ISIS seeks to expand its presence in Central Asia, which will have important strategic implications for the region and neighboring countries.

There are two hotspots with a high-tension capacity in the Central Asian region for the exploitation of extreme groups: First, the Fergana Valley, a region between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which will be most damaging to the interests of Western countries in the event of unrest

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and destabilization. The second point of instability is the northern border of Afghanistan with Central Asian countries, especially Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, where the crisis threatens the security of the region. In addition to these issues, it should be emphasized that ISIS's main strategy is to recruit from among Islamic countries, especially among radical Muslims, and they have designed special programs to achieve this goal. Hence, the main question of the present study is: what are the preconditions that have made Central Asia the focal point for the Takfiri terrorists of ISIS? To find the appropriate answer to this question, the research will test the following hypothesis: The diversity of ethnic groups and radical Islamist parties that engage in historical and ideological conflicts, and in particular the political ineffectiveness of the governorates of this region, has led to the growth of radicalism and the exploitation of the ISIS Takfiri terrorist group, and strengthening and expansion of its presence and influence in the five Central Asian countries.

This paper examines multiple Islamist parties, radicalism and extremism, the ISIS group, as well as the political ineffectiveness of the governments in Central Asia. It should be noted that the method of research in this paper is descriptive-analytical and the research is an applied one. The main emphasis of this research is that the existence of suitable fields such as ethnic-religious tensions and the structural weakness of the state in Central Asian countries have led to the gradual emergence and evolution of numerous fundamentalist streams in this region. From this perspective, the existence of extremist thoughts and currents leads to the emergence and attraction of other new radical groups and parties in these areas, including the Takfiri terrorist group of ISIS, which is currently active in Syria and Iraq. In a futuristic view based on the available reasons and evidences, it can be said that due to the availability of suitable platforms for the growth and influence of this group in the Central Asian region, the near future will see the consolidation of ISIS presence in the countries of the region, in a way that will raise security threats, especially for the countries of the region, and particularly for China, Russia and Iran. Because of the many internal problems in the governments and societies of Central Asian countries (such as disadvantages and Social Problems, tension between the elites, the weakness and inefficiency of the state structure and the lack of proper mechanisms for gaining power), the realm for crisis and tensions have been provided to extremist groups such as ISIS, and the ground has been prepared for crises. These groups have tried to achieve their goals by exploiting these issues and by recruiting forces from these communities, as a result creating the ground for gaining political power and social influence in Central Asia. Thus, in a long-term perspective, it can be induced that these issues have contributed to the spread of tensions within these areas, the rise of religious extremism and the growth of militarization in Central Asia, and even the intensification of rivalry between major powers in these regions.

Studies of this research as well as current trends show that the five Central Asian countries, (due to ethno-religious variations and the existence of fundamentalist parties such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Al-Nusra Party, and other parties of this kind, which have a terrorist nature and are essentially a promoter of violence and extremism and have close and effective relations with other fundamentalist organizations such as al-Qaeda in neighboring countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan,) can be a good place to carry out ISIS terrorist activities. In addition, the weakness of the political structure of the governments, the inability to provide social justice, and the distribution of resources and equal economic opportunities between community members, are the basis for promoting extremist thoughts and handling violent acts by terrorist groups such as ISIS in the five countries of Central Asia. More importantly, the existence of evidences of the presence of Central Asian nationals among ISIS terrorist troops has provided a conducive platform for the formation of an Islamic caliphate government in these countries. Therefore, the anticipation of this study is that, in the near future, ISIS, with the help of citizens from Central Asian countries, will first consolidate the foundations of its thinking in these countries and then turn Central Asia into the focus of its terrorist activities. Because of this, there will be considerable security and geopolitical threats in this region, as well as for neighboring countries, especially for Iran, due to its common borders.

**Keywords:** Central Asia, ISIS, Islamic Fundamentalism, Salafism, Threat.

## **Iran's Pragmatic Foreign Policy toward South Caucasus in the Post-JCPOA Era**

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### **Abstract**

The motivation and expression of the theme: The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 once again turned the South Caucasus into a great game of regional and trans-regional powers. Russia, Iran, Turkey and Europe as well as other actors such as the United States and China, and even the Zionist regime, are competing to gain access to strategic resources and transportation routes in the South Caucasus. Meanwhile, Iran has witnessed the events occurring in the South Caucasus and Central Asia during the past 25 years, what she has not been able to do a lot about. Yet, Tehran has to some extent succeeded in maintaining her historical role and position in this region due to adopting some pragmatic policies towards former Soviet republics.

Today, Iran's political and economic presence in the region is expected to increase as Iran releases from chapter 7 of the charter of the United States and with the end of the sanctions by UN Security Council against Iran. The conclusion of a nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5 + 1, called JCPOA, on July 14, 2015, and its implementation on January 17, 2016, despite of the withdrawal of Washington on May 8, 2018, and the ongoing talks on the cost-benefit of continuing this agreement without the presence of the United States, have provided an opportunity to improve political and trade relations between Iran and other countries. In this situation, the diplomatic apparatus of the Islamic Republic of Iran can enhance the country's national interests by taking advantage of the potential opportunities and reducing the existing challenges in strengthening relations with the republics of the South Caucasus. However, in addition to the geostrategic importance, geographical proximity and historical and cultural ties of Iran with the South Caucasus, the most pragmatic approach of Iranian foreign policy has been toward the republics of this region (along with the Central Asian republics). In another word, although Iran's relationship with the three republics of the South Caucasus has had ups and downs since their independence, it has been less involved with idealistic/ideological

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considerations than Tehran's relations with its other neighbors as well as other countries in the world and geopolitical and objective interests are more evident.

**Purpose, Question and Hypothesis:** The purpose of this study is to assess the opportunities and challenges facing the Islamic Republic of Iran in relations with the South Caucasian republics in the post-war arena in case of continuation and strengthening of a pragmatic approach in Tehran's foreign policy in this region. Therefore, the question this study is seeking to answer is how Iran's pragmatic foreign policy in the post- JCPOA Era affects opportunities and threats Iran may face. The initial answer to this question (hypothesis) is that "the continuation and strengthening of Iran's pragmatic foreign policy towards the South Caucasian republics could allow Tehran to take advantage of the opportunities ahead in this region and to avoiding its challenges".

**Methodology:** The method used in this research is descriptive-analytical (qualitative). We also use the inferential methodology, along with utilizing the ability to understand the dynamics of the pragmatic foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in South Caucasian republics, as well as relying on the existing evidences and facts. **Findings:** for Iran the South Caucasus is both a source of opportunity and a source of the threat. From the perspective of the political elites, the South Caucasus is considered to be the continuation of the historical and cultural sphere of influence of Iran. Thus, even when developing Iranian foreign policy was slowed down by international sanctions due to the nuclear program, Tehran remained an important actor in the South Caucasus. Now, along with the continuation and strengthening of the pragmatism approach in foreign policy, JCPOA can, in addition to accelerating the process of normalization of Iran's relations with other countries, may have a significant impact on the regional role of Iran, the changing of the balance of regional power in favor of Tehran and improving its regional status, both economically and politically. However, Iran's policy towards the South Caucasus has been inherently pragmatic from the outset and has been shaped by practical politics, historical experiences, and balance-of-power calculations. Therefore, although Tehran may have religious aspirations and desires regarding this region, she can at the same time be able to recognize the limitations of its ability and external challenges, and therefore, her regional policy in the South Caucasus has relatively been Cautious and balanced.

The main goals and interests of Iran in the South Caucasus can be divided into four general categories. First, the decline in the influence of outside powers, in particular the European Union, NATO, the United States and the Zionist regime is seen as a security threat. Implementing this will reduce Iran's security concerns and gives Tehran more room to increase its cooperation with the three Republics of the region. First, although unlike Russia and Turkey, Iran is not a weapon dealer to the South Caucasian

states, the mere use of Tehran's nuclear program can be viewed as a security threat for the countries of the region, which, of course, signing of the JCPOA and the endorsement of the international community of the peaceful enjoyment of Iran's nuclear capability will partly diminish such concerns in the future. Second, the continuation of the neutralization of possible security threats the instability in the South Caucasus, which could affect the northern borders of Iran. Third, to gain a better position through the expansion of political, cultural and economic relations with the republics of the region. Fourth, to determine a legal regime of the Caspian Sea corresponding to the fair share of Iran.

Finally, the findings show that the lifting of international sanctions against Iran and normalization of the west-Iran relations changes the balance of power in the South Caucasus in favor of Iran and challenges the other regional powers including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Russia and the occupier regime of Israel. To benefit from returning to South Caucasus in the post-JCPOA Era, Tehran needs to take advantage of a Strategic policy-making based on pragmatic approaches. The most efficient way of increasing power and presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region and the world is to adopt a pragmatic foreign policy with features such as refraining from unproductive confrontation, de-ideologizing relations with other states, tactical flexibility, prioritizing objective interests over subjective interests.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, Iran, JCPOA, Pragmatism, South Caucasus.

## **Ontological Security: An Instrument for Western Geostrategic Intervention in the Caspian Sea (Emphasizing the Energy Issue)**

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### **Abstract**

The Caspian Sea, which is the largest lake in the world, with no natural waterway to the world's open seas, with a length of 1200 km and an average width of 300 km in the east of the Caucasus, has been the source of civilization and tribes since 75,000 thousand years ago. In the years before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caspian Sea was known as a common sea between Iran and the Soviet Union, and this de facto border was recognized until the collapse. Iran, with the exception of its own issues, did not play a role in the issues of the region. The Caspian Basin was the sphere of Soviet influence, and the Soviet Union dominated the northern, northeastern and western parts of the region as part of its territory. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a couple of countries were established in the Caspian region, while these states along with the great powers faced new challenges. The post-1991 Caspian Sea geopolitical region also emerged as an active and functional area. The most important issues that have changed the political geography and boundaries of the Caspian region are including: the Caspian Sea legal regime, ethnic conflicts in the countries of the region, regional energy resources as well as environmental issues. What is considered more important for Western powers is a strategic influence in a region that is considered a kind of "backyard" of Russia.

As such, the West tried to continue to engage in exploration, extraction and transfer of energy from the newly independent states to their strategic influence in the region. On the same basis, over the past two decades, the construction of energy transit corridors outside Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran and security of energy supply has become the priority of the regional policy of these countries. Indeed, the policies and efforts of great international powers to secure their interests and strengthen their geostrategic position have paved the way for the safe transfer of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea resources. Meanwhile, the geographic situation of the region, the economic and political conditions of the Caspian region, the existence of

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potential sources of crisis in this area, as well as the process of global security and political developments in the world, including the factors affecting the production and the Caspian hydrocarbon supply to the consumer markets are instrumental. The elements have led to the adoption of new strategies by transnational actors to confront the Russia and Islamic Republic of Iran in the region, and the Caspian area has become an international conflict center and as one of the most enticing regions. Therefore the economic revenues of the Caspian states are largely due to the energy supply and sale of energy carriers, they provide ontological security and the basis for defining the national interests affected by identity and cultural perception, and hence the definition of identity and normative from the region and its equations, they tried to keep these republics states in their sphere of influence.

The assessment of the status of the Caspian littoral states shows that the political and economic collapse of these countries has been heavily influenced by identity patterns that have been widely practiced and enjoyed by the United States and the West. Thus, these countries are desperate for attracting foreign investment and having a share of world market. Since most of the newly independent states are ruled by undemocratic regimes, the mentality of their leaders strongly affects their interactions with other countries of the region. Meanwhile, culture, language, religion, ideology and race as an opportunistic and identity challenge have played a large role in shaping the identity of states in the Caspian region, which can be reflected in the form of ethnic and religious tensions and terrorism.

The research question is that how the ontological security provides the basis for the geostrategic influence of the West in the Caspian region? The hypothesis of the paper is that security-related psychology in the Caspian Sea has become an excuse for the strategic influence of the West through an intervention to secure energy. In order to prove the hypothesis, the research method is descriptive-analytical and based on reliable statistics and documents.

As a result, it must be said that the energy sources in the region and the resulting developments have a major impact on the direction of these security components and the delineation of the boundaries between the internal powers in this region. Firstly, the social and ethnic tensions and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism threaten to exploit the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea. For instance, ethnic tensions on the northern route can be pointed out, which have created conflicting interests and security concerns for transnational countries, and secondly, the actions taken by large foreign powers to manage the component Security (such as counterterrorism, Islamism, and intervention to resolve territorial disputes based on ethnicity and race) justify the transfer of Caspian energy resources at a lower cost than the energy market. In this regard, the goals of the US and the West in the Caspian Sea, which apparently include the promotion of democracy and free markets, regional peace and cooperation to create business opportunities, but



in practice such efforts have focused on energy issues. Hence, it can be said that the existence of energy resources in the Caspian Sea is a hedgehog of two tails because it can also be a source of income or a basis for cooperation with neighboring countries, and on the other hand, by not defining the legal regime of this sea, the strategy of the West in the region brought potential risks to coastal countries (Iran and Russia). With this process, it is not surprising that the continuing disagreement over the Caspian Sea borders does not encourage the involved countries to prepare themselves for military self-defense.

**Keywords:** Energy Carrier, Energy Security, European Union, Ontological Security, The Caspian Sea, United States.

## **The Study of Development Indicators of Caspian Sea Region (CSR) Countries in the Regional Convergence Process**

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### **Abstract**

In the age of globalization and the Regional trade integrations (RTIs) of the world economy, economic development is not just a national issue and the states, to achieve the desired level of national development, have also to avail themselves of existing regional and international resources and opportunities. How to benefit from regional and international resources is one of the most significant questions facing all states, particularly developing countries including Caspian Sea Region (CSR) & Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member countries. This very significance of regional and international resources has resulted in a growing interest in the regional economic integration (REI) during the last decades. Nowadays, almost all countries take part in some kind of Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) in its various stages of development and many countries enjoy the membership of a handful of RTAs. And it is reported that nearly 60% of international trade flows within these arrangements.

Having substantial potential, most CSR/ ECO member countries also have been long pushing for the establishment of regional economic and trade. These efforts imply an interest on the side of CSR/ ECO countries. However, despite these efforts, no commensurate progress has been made. For example, as to the ECO itself, during the five decades since its inception, it has not made a significant breakthrough. It appears that, under the circumstances, it is not feasible to establish an efficient economic and trade arrangement embracing all ECO Members and taking an incremental or step-by-step approach would probably be more successful. Thus, the most practical way to achieve the long-term goal of "sustainable regional

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development" would be to create an active nucleus of ECO member countries with more capacity, interest and coordination for economic and trade cooperation which other countries can join later.

Nowadays, the world experience different levels of regional economic integration in different regions. In the region surrounding Iran, also, there exist three regional economic arrangements called ECO, CIS, and CSR which can be considered as Iran's potential natural trade partners (NTP). At first, there seems to be clear differences among the member states of the three arrangements, including, inter alia, incongruous economic structures, uneven human/ economic development, varying political systems, and ethnic and cultural diversity.

In the following article however, we have examined the feasibility of establishing an initial effective core for economic integration in the region. To this end, as all of the arrangements are not efficient economic actors, we have to seek countries enjoying the minimum international macroeconomic capabilities necessary to constitute the initial core. The following article consists of several parts follows: introduction, International Relations (IR) theoretical literature on economic integration, international macroeconomic variables & the regional core, selection of variables/ countries, the methodology of country/ variable ranking, ranking results for feasibility assessment and conclusion.

The components and backgrounds of regionalism are diverse in the world, but they all come from a range of factors and conditions that can be cited by factors such as geography, the size of the economy, cultural similarities, and, in particular, political will. The use of existing capacities and the development of relations, co-operation and relations with the Caspian littoral states have been at the forefront of regional interactions of Iran, so that in policy making, the development of relations with these countries has become more and more important.

This significant development has been achieved with the planning and implementation of international macroeconomic components of the Caspian Sea Region (CSR). In this paper, we try to study the comparative-analytical and comparative-library-based method and the convergence and regionalism theories, the dimensions of the impact of the macroeconomic components of these countries on the development of regional cooperation in the process of regional development. In fact, given the importance of developing regional relations, cooperation and regional ties to Iran, we are looking to answer the question of how international macroeconomic components of can be effective in the evolutionary process of regionalism and convergence of Iran with these countries. The answer to this question is that the use of the capacities of international economic actors is a fundamental step in developing relations and expanding cooperation and inter-regional relations between Iran and these countries. In the event of the seriousness and determination of the parties in providing comprehensive infrastructures and

institutional capacities and subsequently increasing the flow of bilateral and regional trade, it can be considered a turning point in the evolutionary process of regional integration of Iran with these countries. According to the present research results, in terms of economic capabilities and trade relations, Caspian Sea Region Countries (CSR): Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan are the most eligible countries to constitute the initial core for regional economic integration.

**Keywords:** Caspian Sea Region Countries (CSR), Development Indicators, International Macroeconomics, Iran, Regional Development, Regional Trade Partner, Regionalization.

## **Turkey's Foreign Policy toward Central Eurasia; Energy Diplomacy Approach Regional Sphere (2002- 2014)**

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### **Abstract**

Turkey's foreign policy was initially formed based on non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighborhood countries and the periphery region. However, after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, and consequently the emergence of developments such as the new republics in Central Asia, the expansion of the idea of democracy and the change in the security balance of the region, the foreign policy of Turkey changed. As a result, peripheral regions such as Eurasia, which were previously not in the top priority of Turkish foreign policy, found a special role in the country's diplomatic relations.

The development of Turkish foreign policy has been so dramatic that some have called it the new Turkey. The new foreign policy, the architect of which is Ahmet Davutoglu, is based on two principles, "Zero problems with neighbors" and "Maximum cooperation." In the new Turkish foreign policy doctrine, foreign policy officials believe that Turkey has strategic depth due to its geographic and historical location. For this reason, it should be ranked as a unique country and be considered a central power. The doctrine believes that Turkey should take the lead in its peripheral regions and gain its strategic global significance. Therefore, Turkey must establish friendly relations with its neighbors and resolve its differences with them. Turkey's most important goal in this framework is to achieve the highest degree of convergence and cooperation with its neighbors.

One of the most important peripheries in Turkish foreign policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union is the Central Eurasia region. An overview of Turkey's foreign policy in the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union shows that its foreign policy was based on the cultural and ideological policies towards the Central Eurasia region. But after the Justice and

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Development Party, which played a significant role in improving the Turkish economy, economic issues became the top priority of its foreign policy. In this regard, Turkey's competitive foreign policy (ideological competition with the countries of the region, including Russia, Georgia, and Armenia) has changed to cooperation with its neighbors. The main question of the article is, what was the most important economic factor affecting the activation of Turkey's foreign policy towards the Eurasian region after the rise of the Justice and Development Party? The hypothesis is that some issues related to the energy sector, such as providing energy needs, turning to be corridors, energy hubs, and energy security, have been the most important factors in taking Turkey's active orientation towards Central Eurasia.

This article, by using the regionalism approach, analyzes Turkey's foreign policy toward the Eurasian region. We can divide the regionalism of Turkey's foreign policy in different periods. In the first period that included the term of Kamal Atatürk's Presidency (1923-1939), Turkish foreign policy followed the principle of the traditional balance of power-peace, peace at home, peace in the world. In the second period (after World War II until the collapse of the Soviet Union) membership of the Council of Europe (1949) and NATO (1959) and ensuring the security of the West in the region was the main concern of Turkey's foreign policy. Under these conditions, the main objectives of Turkish foreign policy, as well as securing the West, was to confront the danger and influence of communism and maintain Israel's security. The third period of regionalism in Turkish foreign policy has continued since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Under this condition, the Eurasian region that has an important strategic and geopolitical role in energy, has become attractive for Ankara officials.

On the one hand the strategic role of Eurasia and the shortage of energy resources in Turkey and the increasing oil and gas consumption in this country, has made this region more important for Turkey's officials.

There are some parameters that expose Turkey's geopolitical and geo-economical significance in terms of Eurasian energy geopolitics.

- Turkey is located in a region that contains 71 percent of the World's natural gas reserves and 72 percent of all oil reserves.<sup>1</sup>
- By 2012, 6-7 percent of the World's oil demands are expected to be transported through Turkey.<sup>2</sup>
- Basic figures indicate Turkey's significance for the Caspian Energy Basin.
- The Caspian Energy Basin contains 4 percent (200 billion barrels) of the World's oil reserves and 5 percent (180 trillion m<sup>3</sup>) of all natural gas reserves. Therefore it is of outstanding importance.

So the targets<sup>16</sup> of the Turkish Energy Policies can be summarized as:

- To become an energy corridor (Not only between the East and West but also between the North and South).

- Utilizing its geopolitical location to become a transit country and the 4th main arterial road and to integrate with EU energy markets.

- To become an energy hub and make Ceyhan a significant port just like Amsterdam in the long term. To make Ceyhan the energy distribution center of global energy markets.

In a nutshell, Turkey's energy strategy is aimed to cover the energy needs independently, at least on paper. The theoretical backgrounds for above mentioned targets are ready and are waiting to be practiced. As a result, we can say that the dependency in Turkish energy policies and increasing energy demands are major factor for its foreign policy toward Eurasia. Considering that Turkey has a strategic position in the transit of oil and gas resources to Europe, it can gain huge profits from the Eurasia region. Furthermore, Eurasia provides Turkey accessibility to new consumption markets; therefore, it seems Central Asia will be more important for Turkey in the future.

**Keywords:** Energy Pipelines, Energy Security, Eurasia, Foreign Policy, Turkey.

## **An Analysis of the Relationship between Economic Indicators and Tendency toward Radical Islam in Central Asia**

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### **Abstract**

Following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the reunion of millions of Central Asian Muslims with the rest of the Islamic World drew considerable attention from analysts. The collapse not only triggered the independence of five Central Asian republics, but also turned Islam from being the faith of the minority (since it was not fully demonstrating itself during the Soviet era) to the official religion of the majority. The fact that religion like nationalism could be a strong element of political identity began to be considered as a defining feature of foreign policy in Central Asian contemporary International Relations. In other words, return of the five republics was to a level that their new Islamic face started to be a distinctive feature of national identity for them. In such a context, central Asian states by enacting new regulations, besides putting limitations on Islamic activities, scrutinized religious organizations. Government pressures multiplied via continued economic crisis, overarching administrative corruption, local official corruption, insufficient infrastructures and other issues resulted in strengthening radical tendencies amongst large groups of Central Asian inhabitants specially the youths who were marginalized due to an unfavorable situation in their societies. The aforementioned reasons as well as ISIS' strategic propaganda and its special approaches (such as the promise of a better life and position in comparison with Russia, providing incentives and promoting social standing) in the region has helped the group successfully implement its media warfare. Therefore, different reasons can be raised when considering Muslims orientation toward radical fundamentalist Islam. The paper tries to investigate the relationship between economic factors and tendency toward radical Islam in the five

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commonwealth Central Asian republics. It can be said that economic factors in general and economic poverty in particular have influenced in two distinctive ways the tendency toward radical Islam in Central Asia: first, it has presented an incompetent picture of the governments, hastening the radical-fundamentalist movements; second of all, it has forced the Central Asian governments, already facing severe economic conditions, to seek the exploitation of ethnic identities and nationalism. But considering their severe economic problems, nationalism has not turned into a national movement and has many Islamic features, resulting in presenting the idea of Islamic socialism by some hardliners in the region.

Main question: is there any relationship between economic factors and tendency toward radical Islam in the five commonwealth Central Asian republics? (case study: ISIS). Hypothesis: in answering the research question, two main hypotheses are raised. Hypothesis 1: there is a significant relationship between economic development indicators of commonwealth countries and how ISIS used to absorb new members among them. Hypothesis 2: there is a significant relationship between economic development indicators in the commonwealth countries and tendency toward ISIS.

Research method: the present study based on research nature is considered to be a descriptive study of correlation type. Quantitative methods are used to collect research data especially secondary analysis method based on statistics of economic development from Polish Institute of International Affairs (2015). Research conclusion: findings of the study based on analytical-descriptive method show that as of the five studies Central Asian republics, Kyrgyzstan with 7.1 %; Tajikistan with 13.6 %; Kazakhstan with 17/9 %; Turkmenistan with 25.7 %, and Uzbekistan with 35.7 % have the lowest to highest fighters in ISIS respectively. The present study shows: (1) there is a statistical significant difference at 0.01 in economic indicators including employment rate, percent of population under poverty rate line, business activities indicator, per capita GDP, and business freedom indicator among the studied countries; (2) there is a statistical significant difference at 0.01 in economic indicators including employment rate, percent of population under poverty rate line, business activities indicator, per capita GDP, and business freedom indicators and tendency toward ISIS, among the studied countries. The level of economic development (as the general indicator) with  $-0.57$  scales shows the significant correlation of the indicator with tendency toward ISIS. Regarding the analytical and experimental analysis of the present study, it can be said that following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, under which the Central Asian communities enjoyed a certain level of organization, communities in the region were deprived of the strengthening organization. In this context, the Islamic ideology that does not categorize humans based on ethnic origins, and acts as a unifying power, was faced with increasing

acceptance and a role of balancer. In this way, the Islamic movements of Central Asia gradually lost their nationalistic identity and became increasingly Islamic. Deteriorating economic situation all over the region, officials' inability to decrease the difficulties of ordinary people and severe crackdown has resulted in an increasing trend toward Islamism. Radical groups absorb marginalized poor inhabitants of Central Asia via multilayered propaganda which focuses on their severe economic difficulties, deep-rooted poverty, and inflation. These groups, in their propaganda depict themselves as leaders of redemption, provide an idealist worldview to the youth and promise to remove economic difficulties. As a result, Central Asia has become a safe zone for radical Islamic groups.

**Keywords:** Central Asia, Economic Indicators, ISIS, Radical Islam, Unemployment Rate.

## **Patterns of Friendship and Hostility and Crises in the South Caucasus**

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### **Abstract**

The region known as the South Caucasus is the geographic environment of the three non-independent countries of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. These three countries were raised after the collapse of the Soviet Union as independent countries. These three countries, in particular, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia after the short-term experience of independence in the years 1920-1917, were for several years under Soviet Union influence. Before the collapse of the bipolar system, many of the security issues in the area were under control of the Soviet central system, and there was little room for the independence of government. But after the collapse of the system, many issues have become more and more of a challenge to the South Caucasus. This region is known for its Balkans and Eurasia because of its diverse ethnic backgrounds. The picture presented today in the Southern Caucasus in many studies is separation, ethnic and religious differences between various identities and multiple crises in the corners of the region, given the friendships and historical enmities between these identities is multiplied.

The South Caucasus region has been the focus of conflict, and crisis since the Cold War. These include the Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia crises, all of which indicate a crisis and insecurity in the region. The existence of a network of identity actors in the South Caucasus, disregarded by identity identities in the three republics of the region, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, each of which has different patterns of friendship and hostility, are among the main causes of tension and crisis in the South Caucasus. Based on this, the research seeks to answer these questions: How are friendship and hostility patterns in the South Caucasus region? And how have these patterns affected the crises and their continuity in the region? The present paper assumes that among the numerous identities existing in the Southwest of Iran, according to the historical background,

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different patterns of friendship and hostility have been formed between them, and the existence of these patterns has led to crises and their continuity in the region.

To examine such assumptions, this essay focuses on the theoretical basis of Alexander Wendt's social identity theory. Wendt's theory is good for exploring the roots of friendship and hostility in an area where identities play a significant role. He states that identities are interacting with each other, and these interactions play an important role in shaping patterns of friendship and hostility. In other words, the identity of activists does not determine anarchic conditions. These are their interactions that identify their identity, depending on their identity and the other that anarchy finds its meaning. In other words, in these interactions, signs may be exchanged, procedures can take shape and actions that lead to hostility, feelings of threat and lack of security, and may be accompanied by a different set of signs, procedures and actions. Friendship, co-operation and common interests are formed. Consequently, the structure of identities and interests is not logically obtained from anarchy. In these circumstances, how the distribution of power on the calculations of governments is also dependent on a perceptual understanding of oneself and the other. That is, any increase in other strength is not considered a threat, but if another is considered an enemy, the slightest increase in his power will be considered a threat. He believes that anarchy does not have any consistent logic, and this is a "culture" or "common ideas" of the system that can provide consistency or contradiction. He divides the logic of anarchic system into three categories: Hobbes, Locke, and Kant, and explains that if Hobbes's culture dominates, governments are more involved in the conflict, if Locke's culture dominates, both the phenomenon of co-operation and conflict arise. The governments are more inclined to cooperate, and ultimately, if the Kantian culture is dominant, collaboration will prevail. In other words, in the Hobbesian model, the dominant role is hostility. The goal of "self" is to secure its own existence and to destroy or occupy (dominate) the "other". Competition plays the dominant role in the Locke's model. The rivals, like enemies, are formed on the basis of representations about "themselves" and "others" and in relation to violence. But these representations are less threatening. Contrary to the enemies, competitors expect each other to act in a way that their sovereignty is recognized. This will allow governments to derive reliable inferences about each other's mentality. In the Kantian model, dominant role is friendship and the intentions and behaviors of "self" toward the other are "peaceful".

The diverse identities of the South Caucasus over the years have shaped patterns of alienation to hostility, which have played a significant role in the emergence of major crises and tensions in the region. There is a pattern of hostility between the Armenians with the Azeris, the Armenians with the Turks, the Georgians with the Russians, the Abkhazians and the Ossetians

with the Georgians, as well as the hostilities between the Azeris and the Russians and the Azeri with endeavors, and finally the patterns of friendship. The Armenian identity of the Russians as well as Armenians with the Azeris has played an important role in shaping the numerous crises in the South Caucasus.

The research method is "descriptive-analytical" which has been tried to find answers to the research questions using library data and information, as well as sites, articles and Internet resources. This paper is set up in an introduction, three sections and one conclusion. In the first section, Alexander Wendt's "Social Identity" approach will be described as a theoretical and conceptual framework of the paper. The second part will describe the various and varied identities in the South Caucasus, and finally, in the third and final section the friendship and hostility patterns in the South Caucasus and its impact on the crises and trends and their continuity in the region are examined based on the topics discussed.

**Keywords:** Crisis, Identity, Russia, Patterns of Friendship and Hostility, South Caucasus.

## **Russia's Threat and its Influence on Georgian Security Policies**

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### **Abstract**

Georgia has faced challenges since the independence from the Soviet Union. Some of them were inherited from the Soviet era and some of them like political instability, disintegration, separation and insecurity that was worn during the Soviet Union, in the era of independence emerged. Outside Georgia's borders in the South Caucasus, the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict also made the region unstable and insecure. Among the internal and external threats that Georgia has faced since 1991, it can be said that Russia as one of the most important threats to Georgia's security, so that Russia is in Georgia's new security doctrine which was adopted in 2012, has been mentioned as the main threat for Georgia. Also in the National Military Strategy document which was released in 2014 by the Georgian Ministry of Defense, Russia has been introduced as the occupying country of Georgia, and as a factor in the rise of terrorist acts in the country.

The seriousness of Russia's threat to Georgia raises this question that how much this threat is rooted in the mentality and history of the Georgians about the Russians and to what extent is this threat from objective facts? In the other words, what indicators made Russia a threat to Georgia? Ultimately the main question is what impact Russia has had on Georgia's security policy from 1991 to 2013 and Georgia has adopted what policies to respond to the Russian threats? To answer these questions a descriptive-analytical method and the defensive realism approach, Stephan Walt's balance-of-threat theory is used.

According to balance of threat theory, states' alliance behavior is determined by the threat they perceive from other states. Walt contends that

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states will generally balance by allying against a perceived threat, although very weak states are more likely to bandwagon with the rising threat in order to protect their own security. Walt identifies four criteria states use to evaluate the threat posed by another state: its aggregate strength (size, population, and economic capabilities), its geographic proximity, its offensive capabilities, and its offensive intentions. Walt argues that the more other states view a rising state as possessing these qualities, the more likely they are to view it as a threat and balance against it.

Balance of threat theory modified realism (as well as the neorealism of Kenneth Waltz) by separating power from threat. In balance of power theory, which had previously dominated realist analyses, states balance against others whose power (i.e., military capabilities) was rising—greater power was assumed to reflect offensive intentions. Walt argues that this is not borne out by empirical evidence, and that balance of threat theory—in which states will not balance against those who are rising in power but do not display offensive intentions—gives a better account of the evidence.

Using the indicators of Walt's balance of threat theory, it can be concluded that Russia is a serious threat to Georgia, and Georgia has adopted balancing acts to counteract this threat. Georgia's withdrawal from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the use of alternative organizations such as GUAM and NATO and the promotion of relations with the EU and the United States are the indicators of this counterbalance against Russia.

The GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development is a regional organization of four post-Soviet states: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. Cooperation between Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova started with the GUAM consultative forum, established on 10 October 1997, in Strasbourg and named after the initial letters of each of those countries. In 1999, the organization adopted the name GUUAM due to the membership of Uzbekistan. A summit in Yalta on 6 to 7 June 2001 was accompanied by the signing of GUUAM's charter which formalized the organization. However, in 2002, Uzbekistan announced that it planned to withdraw from the organization, and following this announcement started to ignore GUUAM summits and meetings. On 24 May 2005, shortly after the Andijan massacre, Uzbekistan finally gave an official notice of withdrawal from the organization to the Moldovan presidency, thus changing the group's name back to GUAM.

Georgia and NATO relations officially began in 1994 when Georgia joined the NATO-run Partnership for Peace. Georgia has moved quickly following the Rose Revolution in 2003 to seek closer ties and eventual membership with NATO. Georgia's powerful northern neighbor, Russia, has opposed the closer ties, including those expressed at the 2008 Bucharest summit where NATO members promised that Georgia would eventually join the organization. In the 7 December 2011 statement of the North Atlantic Council Georgia was designated as an "aspirant country".

Georgian–American relations continue to be very close and encompass multiple areas of bilateral cooperation. The United States for its part is actively assisting Georgia in strengthening its state institutions in face of increasing pressure from its northern neighbor Russia and has provided the country with financial assistance in excess of 3 billion dollars since 1991. Since 2009, Georgian–American relations are streamlined by the U.S.–Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership, which created four bilateral working groups on priority areas of democracy; defense and security; economic, trade, and energy issues; and people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

Georgia in 2004-2008 sought to become a member of NATO, but did not succeed in the face of strong Russian opposition. In February 2012, it was agreed that the U.S. and Georgia will start working on a Free Trade Agreement which, if materialized, will make Georgia the only European country to have such treaty with the United States. Georgia and the European Union have maintained relations since 1996 and in 2006 a five-year "Action Plan" of rapprochement was implemented in the context of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). A more comprehensive Association Agreement entered into force on 1 July 2016. A European Union Monitoring Mission was sent to Georgia in the wake of the 2008 South Ossetia war. Georgia does not have any official status as a candidate for future enlargement of the European Union, but in 2011 Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili expressed a desire for his country to become a member state of the EU. This view has been explicitly expressed on several occasions as links to the United States, EU and NATO have been strengthened in an attempt to move away from the Russian sphere of influence.

**Keywords:** Balance of Threat, Georgia, Guam Organization, NATO Organization, Organization of the Commonwealth of Independent States.



## **Analyzing Iran's Security Ties with Central Asia Based on the "Regional Security Complexes" Theory**

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### **Abstract**

As a country in the immediate neighborhood of Central Asia, Iran has always had the potential to be affected by the security situation in the region. While studying Iran's security interests in Central Asia, this article tries to examine the major threats and challenges facing Iran in the region. The main question of the article is that why the security situation in Central Asia affects Iran's national security and national interests? The article claims that the level and intensity of Iran's security ties with Central Asia has caused the country to become a part of Central Asian Regional Security Complex. The article analyzes the issue based on the theory-testing method, using Barry Buzan's theory of Regional Security Complexes as the basis of its analysis.

Iran has always been worried about any extension of security ties between the Central Asian countries, the United States and Israel. It has also criticized – though more cautiously – the presence of NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Central Asia. In case of NATO, more than being sensitive toward the presence of Central Asian states in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP) program, Iran's criticisms have been directed toward the use of NATO framework by some individual member-states, such as Turkey and the United States to establish a series of bilateral security ties with the Central Asian states, thereby influencing their decision making processes in the security sphere. In fact, Iran's main concern regarding the activities of both NATO and OSCE in Central Asia, is related to the long-term implications of the involvement of these organizations in the region. As such, Iran worries that the scale of both organizations' plans could be gradually expanded, so that Iran would see itself on the opposite side of an alignment shaped around an extended Euro-Atlantic security zone.

Iran's concerns about the security situation in Central Asia at the regional level could also be better understood in the context of more wide-range threats arising from the security situation in Afghanistan. Iran has always believed that instability in Afghanistan could spread to different parts of

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Central Asia through Tajikistan. In addition, during the recent decades, Iran has always hosted a large number of Afghan refugees, who, not only impose high economic costs on Iran, but also cause many social problems and tensions. Countering opium and heroin trafficking from Afghanistan requires a large military concentration along the 945-kilometer border between the two countries. Not only Iran faces serious challenges as a country at the forefront of international drug trafficking, but also suffers from domestic drug-related problems. Considering these points, as well as the fact that Iran, along with the Central Asian states, located on the northern route of drug trafficking to Russia and Europe, there's a common interest for Iran and these states to fight against drug trafficking.

On the other hand, Iran's interests in the Caspian Sea are related to determining the legal regime of the sea on one hand, and its militarization on the other. From the viewpoint of environmental security, the critical environmental situation in the Caspian could pose a threat to Iran. The issue of the Caspian Sea legal regime was raised as a regional problem following the collapse of the Soviet Union and because of the increasing attempts made by the former Soviet states to exploit energy resources of the seabed. On the legal status of the Caspian, there hasn't been any consensus among the littoral states. The lack of a consensual legal regime contains the risk of conflict of interests, and even direct conflicts between the various sides, in case of unilateral actions by each party to exploit the resources.

Meanwhile, from the very first days after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has been said that Iran could provide the Central Asian states' energy resources with the shortest transit route. Putting this idea into practice, Iran would grab the attention of the Central Asian energy suppliers and the European consumers. However, the most important driving force behind the lucrative project is the Central Asian inclination toward the diversification of energy transit routes and the European desire to diversify its energy resources.

Another issue is that given the intertwined nature of security ties among the Central Asian states on the one hand and between Iran and the region on the other, any instability in these countries could have wider impacts on the whole region, thereby on Iran's national security and interests. The most important threat to the Central Asian republics at the state level, derives from the structural and functional weaknesses of their governments.

Lack of effective institutionalization, as well as widespread corruption in these countries, makes any effective management of security threats by the governments much more difficult and causes them to be always obsessed with their domestic security. Iran's overall policy in this area is based on supporting stability in Central Asia, because in case of the collapse of the existing governments, extremist groups might take the lead, or the territories of these countries could turn into safe havens for terrorists and separatists. In the same vein, Iran interprets the efforts by the Western countries, especially

the US to infiltrate Central Asia through plots such as "color revolutions" as having the same negative impacts on the regional security and stability.

Based on these facts, it could be said that Iran's security ties with Central Asia involve interests as well as challenges at the three system, regional and state levels. These ties has been developing since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, so that it's now even possible to speak about a new "Regional Security Complex" having been shaped among the Central Asian states, Iran, as well as Russia and China as two great powers at the immediate neighborhood of the region with a set of similar security concerns to that of Iran and the Central Asian republics.

**Keywords:** Barry Buzan, Central Asia, Iran, Regional Security Complex, Security.

## **Pathology Management Cultural Services in Tajikistan**

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### **Abstract**

Cultural services, as part of social services and based on internal and external experience, in terms of their impact on society, represent a significant element of national development. In this study, the status of Tajikistan's cultural services is examined with indicators related to cultural and artistic spheres and their access to them. Comparing the growth of a period and how it changes in the provision of cultural services will help to improve understanding of the management of cultural services in Tajikistan. Accessibility, utilization, quality of services, cultural and artistic activities play an important role in meeting the needs of society as well as the standards in question.

The service function of the cultural sector and its evaluation can help the users of information, policymakers and operators to improve understanding of the growth of the cultural sector. The present study aims at investigating the current situation, explaining and analyzing the development trends of the most important spaces, activities of the cultural, artistic sector and aims to answer the main question of the research: How to access and grow cultural services through Performance indicators are responding? One of the most important tools for determining the strengths and weaknesses of performance is evaluating the performance of organizations, this is important by analyzing the evaluation of performance indicators. In this study, we use the above indicators to answer the question "How does the rate of the growth of cultural services of Tajik cultural institutes provide accessibility for the people of the community?"

According to the preliminary studies and available evidence, the research hypothesis suggests that the availability, utilization and quality of the provision of services, cultural and artistic activities are not responsive to the standards in question and are not in accordance with the needs of the community. Therefore, the main hypothesis is that "there is no correlation between access to cultural spaces, services and their growth rates in the Tajik Cultural Organization".

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The service function of cultural devices is one of the tools for human development. In conditions of growth, there are problems that can result from inappropriate management practices. Hence, identifying growth indices, access and participation ratios are the most appropriate ways to evaluate the performance of the cultural sector.

The pathology of managing cultural services in Tajikistan is a systematic effort through the evaluation, measurement of performance and activity of indicators to determine how far the government's cultural services in Tajikistan are responding to the needs of the people and how the extent to which the state's ability to meet cultural needs is. Undoubtedly, the status, role of evaluation and management systems in organizations have long been characterized and paid attention. In recent years, the complexity, speed of operation, flexibility, competition and responsiveness against citizens and clients have become more effective than value and it has gotten twice as important. The domination and consolidation of the socio-cultural approach to mission, processes, services, products and outcomes lead to the organization of desirable affairs, coordination and synergy. Meanwhile, measuring the effectiveness of the social programs of the Tajik Cultural Device through an optimal system of performance assessment increases the coherence, accountability of the programs.

There are several types of cultural activities and services in Tajikistan that serve as indicators for assessing the quality and development of them, which are influenced by the way of cultural management and how they are presented, including: public libraries, cultural and artistic complexes, Cinema halls, theaters, shows and music, museums and publishing books, magazines and newspapers. This paper tries to examine proposed indicators for the promotion and development with a view to national and international perspectives and the challenges ahead.

The research methodology is based on observing parts of cultural and artistic activities, reviewing data from official sources, conducting interviews with experts. This research is of a practical nature according to the subject and the question and its results can be exploited in practice (policy and planning). In terms of research data, descriptive observation and examination of documents are performed by evaluating performance indicators to help and assure the decision-making process through interviewing, viewing and reviewing documents. For data collection, data from cultural institutions providing cultural services and the official system of the Tajik Presidential Statistics Committee for the period 2011-2016 have been used and analyzed in the form of growth rates tables. For a theoretical discussion of books, Persian and foreign articles have been used.

The reflection of the imbalance between Tajikistan's physical and cultural spaces during the past years has been discussed in this article. This study shows that the Tajik cultural and artistic device lacks the proper function of meeting the needs of today's society.

In some cases, where there is relatively good cultural space, the lack of cultural and artistic production with supply and display spaces makes it possible to have easy access and participation as two more important indicators of cultural development. Among other major challenges facing the development of cultural and artistic spheres, the weakness, lack of advanced equipments, facilities, the lack of efficient, adequate skillful people for management, business affairs and ultimately the government's exclusive sovereignty over cultural and artistic space are other major challenges in the process. The main problem lies in the fact that social and cultural competitions are either not fully developed or not rarely developed.

Ultimately, the problem is that the results of cultural activities and their impact on social welfare are neither immediate nor direct, and require a complex system for self-assessment. The fact is that governments, without interfering in culture, should formulate a social order for services in the field of culture. In this regard, by using scientific and technical standards in creating cultural space and improving the quality of cultural products and creating cultural attractions, it is possible to expand the attraction of the audience for the prosperity, promotion of the cultural sector, the consolidation of the cultural services market at the national level, the possibility for access and the participation of more people.

**Keywords:** Cultural Consumption, Cultural Services, Management, Pathology, Tajikistan.

## **Maritime Geopolitics and Russia's Foreign Policy in Ukrainian and Syrian Crises**

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### **Abstract**

Russia has historically had a powerful army and air force but its Navy was weaker than its competitors. Attention to the security and economic importance of the sea areas in the Russian foreign policy in recent years has increased. Russia assumes that presence, influence and control over important seas is one of the foundations of the rise and strengthening of its position in international politics. In the other words, just like any other great power in the last two centuries like Britain, the USA and China which along with their power increased, have created large and strong navies and boosted their presence in the strategic seas, Russia also is going to do same, since its primary goal is to prove itself to the world as a great power and treats and to be treated as one of the poles of international politics. Therefore, Russia has followed wide reinforcement and modernization plans in the Navy. Furthermore, Russia like most of the world's great powers has tried to have military presence beyond its borders. On the other hand, two main international crises in the last six years have been Ukrainian and Syrian crises, which Russia has significantly intervened militarily in both. Syria unlike some countries like Egypt was one of the loyal partners of the Soviet Union and had good relations with it to such a degree that the Soviet Union was permitted to open a naval military base in Tartus in 1971, giving the Soviet Union a stable presence in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. This relationship has continued after the Cold War especially in the Syrian crisis in which Russia firmly supported Syrian government against its enemies who wanted to oust the Assad regime, vetoed all anti-Assad resolutions in the Security Council and finally intervened militarily on the eve of the collapse of the Assad regime on December 2015 and rescued it. On the other side, after Euromaidan demonstrations and the fall of pro-Russian president in Ukraine, as the most important countries for Russia in the Near Abroad, Russia with permission from its parliament invaded the Crimean Peninsula and after a controversial referendum annexed this peninsula. Why Russia did such military actions in Syria and Ukraine? On this basis, the authors

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seek to answer the question that what is the cause of Russian intervention in the Ukrainian and Syrian crisis? Russia obviously has economic and political interest in Syria but why didn't Russia support Saddam in the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 despite that it had even far more economic interest in there than Syria? Or despite the security importance of Ukraine and Russia's concerns about joining of Ukraine to the EU and NATO, why wasn't Russia so sensitive about Baltic countries and allowed them to become members of the EU and NATO? What was the different between Ukraine and Syria and the other cases? In other words what was the 'deep' cause of Russian military involvement in these two crises? In response, the authors claim that one of the main causes of Russia's intervention in Ukraine and Syria is to maintain and strengthen control over the Black and the Mediterranean seas. Given the fact that Russia has naval bases in both Ukraine and Syria by intervening in Ukraine and Syria tries to save the Sevastopol and Tartus bases and thereby strengthens its control of these important areas. As a matter of fact, one of the main factors explaining Russia foreign policy as a whole in recent years is control and domination over the world's crucial water areas. It is obvious that effective and strong influence over the vital sea areas requires having presence in the important coastal countries. Thus having good relations with some coastal countries have become a strategic goal for Russia. No other countries could better serve this Russian goal than Syria and Ukraine, which have unique positions in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea respectively. Russia, as the traditional land power, views the Black Sea as the gate towards world domination and hegemony and sees the Mediterranean Sea as an indispensable part to access the "World Ocean". It shouldn't be overlooked that Russia at first gave much more weight to the Black Sea than the Mediterranean. but in the past two decades during which, NATO has exclusively dominated over the Mediterranean on the one hand and Russia has become more powerful and assertive after the "lost decade" of the 1990s on the other hand, Russia has given more attention to the Mediterranean Sea than before. Russia has traditionally associated Geopolitical thinking and because of its size and geography has been one of the most important geopolitical regions that have attracted geopoliticians. But ironically at the same time, Russia suffers from a "Geopolitical Dilemma" since it has no appropriate access to the warm and free waters. Based on this the authors have found out that the main reason behind the Russian military interventions in Ukraine and Syria was to overcome its Geopolitical Dilemma and to secure its access to the Mediterranean and the Black seas. Indeed, Russia viewed Ukraine and Syrian events through the lens of its long-term, strategic interest so it paid many economic and political costs to ensure its foothold in Tartus and Sevastopol. The methodology used in this article is Descriptive-analytical and data collection is conducted in a combined way desk research and internet resources.

**Keywords:** Geopolitics, Navy, Russia, Syria, Ukraine.



## **U.S. Policy in Central Asia under Bush and Obama**

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### **Abstract**

Central Asia due to its unique geopolitical features has always been the center of severe struggle for power among dominant states in different historical eras. After the Cold War and with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States as the hegemon of the international system invaded Afghanistan in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and has pursued its various and multi-dimensional objectives in this geostrategic region using proportionate strategies and tactics to maintain and enhance its hegemony worldwide and in the five post-soviet states of Central Asia: the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, since then.

The United States' foreign policy is based on "International liberalism" and this fixed pillar has not changed since World War II. In fact, since the end of WWII in 1945, regardless of who the president of the United States of America is, there has been one, fixed grand strategy in the Oval Office: Preserving American Supremacy all over the world. And revolving this fixed principle have been various political, economic, military and cultural tactics altering according to fluctuating regional and international conditions in which American troops and diplomats all around the world operate in. Undoubtedly, Central Asia as a "heartland" and a region rich of natural oil and gas similar to the Persian Gulf with unique geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural features has not been an exception in this regard for the policy makers of the United States' Department of State.

This study using a comparative method tries to answer this main question: What are the similarities and differences of the foreign policy of the United States of America towards Central Asian Republics during George W. Bush tenure (2001-2009) and Barack Obama's presidency (2009-2016)? The answer is that the neo-conservative Bush Administration tried to fulfill Washington foreign policy objectives in Central Asia unilaterally and mostly through hard power and by invasion and militarism. However,

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Barack Obama's administration pursued the same goals through multilateralism and by consultative, institutional mechanisms.

During George W. Bush's presidency, the United States built military bases in the republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and many high ranking military officials travelled to the region regularly. During George Bush's presidency, the United States also tried to impose democracy and freedom of the press and the relative mechanisms to the republics of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan by force which led to the Tulip Revolution in Bishkek in 2005 and the 2005 Andijan Unrest in which many civilians were killed. America then sanctioned the Uzbek government economically and military which darkened the bilateral relations more and Uzbek government forced the U.S. troops to leave the (K2) Air Base. Given to the usage of hard power and militarism, United States' grand strategy during the Bush administration from 2001 to 2009 in Central Asia can be called "Offensive Liberalism".

Whereas, Barack Obama who entered the White House in 2009 found Central Asia and especially Afghanistan in different conditions comparing to the year 2001, so his administration pursued American grand fixed strategy to maintain American global hegemony with some different tactics. In fact, he commenced the "Policy of Change" in order to rectify the image of the United States of America which as a result of the invasion of Afghanistan and vast military presence of American troops all over the region was damaged and impaired. In addition, the U.S. Department of State with "Hillary Clinton", tried to "reset" the bilateral relations with Russia with which during Bush's presidency was impaired. Thus, in contrary to George W. Bush, the Obama administration acted multilaterally based mostly on soft power and through business and economic apparatus. The Oval Office, first and foremost set the agenda of diminishing the number of U.S. troops on the ground in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the United States accepted the Kyrgyz Parliament order to withdraw U.S. troops from Manas Air Base and left this country in 2010.

The White House in the Obama presidency also initiated "New Silk Road" and "Northern Distribution Network" (NDD) as two vast, huge business and transformational projects to enhance its non-military presence in Afghanistan nonmilitary as well as approaching China and Russia as two strategic allies and rivals in Central Asia. The United States also during Obama's presidency seriously pursued the gas and oil pipelines projects which were outside Iran and Russia's main land such as "Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline" or "Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline" called (TAPI) and "Trans-Caspian Pipeline" in order to contain Iran and Russia economically and politically. This is based on the United States' official stated policy and the Obama energy team pursued this policy.

The White House also signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Kazakhstan and reconciled with Uzbekistan which after 2005 Andijan

Unrest had expelled American troops out of (K2) Air Base. The Obama energy team also developed significant vast bilateral relationships with the Republic of Turkmenistan as a huge natural gas container of Central Asia. Contrary to the Bush presidency, during Obama's tenure, many nonmilitary high-ranking officials traveled to the region frequently. The White House, during Obama presidency tried to peruse the U.S. grand strategy of American hegemony through multilateralism, institutionalism and in the framework of collective and consultative mechanisms. Thus, given to the more usage of economic tools, along scaling down of military presence, the United States' grand strategy during the Obama administration from 2009 to 2016 in Central Asia can be called "Defensive Liberalism".

In sum, both George W. Bush and Barack Obama pursued one fixed goal in Central Asia which was to maintain U.S. global hegemony and primacy but due to different regional and international conditions each faced during their presidency, the former used unilateralism, hard power, sanctions and promoting democracy by force while the latter pursued the same goal through multilateral mechanisms, economic forums, gas and oil projects and political reconciliation.

**Keywords:** Bush, Central Asia, Foreign Policy, Obama, United States.

## **Shared Water Resources in Kura-Aras River Basin; the Promoter of Peace in South Caucasia**

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### **Abstract**

The drainage basin of Kura-Aras in the South Caucasus region is located among Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Two main rivers of Kura and Aras are among the biggest rivers in this region with many economic, social, security and political issues. Aras River can be considered as Iran's natural zone of influence and interests because it is located along the Iranian border and is beneficial to this country. Despite this, because of having a border with Russia and the membership of three riparian states in the European Union, it has also taken the attention of great powers and international organizations. For this reason, political, economic and environmental players and actors of the Kura-Aras basin in the south Caucasus are diverse, and both regional and global.

Collaborations based on limited and multilateral agreements among Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan are mainly established through the initiatives of global organizations and European Union and have ignored that Iran and Turkey are two main players and actors in the use and management of the water resources of this basin. Since no international institution has been established for the integrated management of shared water resources in this basin and no treaty has been signed for the sharing of these resources, the use of complexity theory can be beneficial for the optimum use of these resources. Based on different interactions and the influence or common dependence of effective elements in the use of common water resources in the Kura-Aras basin on each other, the understanding of subjects and the prediction of future behavior of the players is so difficult and results in unique behavior of the system that is the result of the accumulation of the behaviors of actors in the micro level. The use of complexity theory in the international relations provides a correct understanding of the issues of this basin, helps find an answer for this main question: how does the lack of balance in the resources and the utilization and also the dependence on the

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shared water resources affect the relations between the states of Kura-Aras basin?

Considering the complexity theory, different features of the behaviors of the states in response to complex issues is not predictable for any research or researcher, but the review of value and legal framework shows that we are not faced with an unorganized complexity and we have access to frameworks for the understanding of the reasons for this complex issues, and we also have common legal values that are agreed upon for an answer. Thus, the states that share the Kura-Aras basin can act based on principles such as equality of sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual interests and good faith and through the use of the above principles can cooperate in this complex system for an ideal use of resources and enough protection of common water resources with each other and reach middle grounds that maintains an organized complexity and the dynamicity of the system and move towards trust making and the stability in their cooperation.

The current study takes advantage the explanatory method and for the testing of the hypothesis uses the positive method of data collection and analysis of the related data and tests the indexes related to the variables forming the concepts. Also, despite the fact that the statistics and data related to the water relations in this water basin is shallow based on the political approaches with an emphasis on international relations, the results of this study proves this hypothesis that the diversity and dependence of factors affecting the use of common water resources in this basin results in the promotion of collaboration and peace, trust making, the increase in stability and reduction of political and security disputes among the states of this basin through the use of two common principles: equitable and reasonable utilization and participation; obligation not to cause significant harm.

1. Based on the rules of the New York 1997 Convention, the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization makes it necessary to pay attention to geographic, hydrographic, hydrological, climatic, ecological and other factors of a natural character; the social and economic needs of the watercourse States concerned; the population dependent on the watercourse in each watercourse states; the effects of the use or uses of the watercourses in the one watercourse state on other watercourse states; existing and potential uses of the watercourse; conservation, protection, development and economy of use of the water resources of the watercourse and the costs of measures taken to that effect; the availability of alternatives of comparable value to a particular planned or existing use.

2. Also the principle of obligation not to cause any significant harm to the other state sharing the basin results in international basin states shall in utilizing an international basin in the territories, take all appropriate measures to prevent the causing of significant harm to other basin states. Where significant harm is nevertheless caused to another water state, the states whose use causes such harm shall in the absence of an agreement to

such use, take all appropriate measures in consultation with the affected state, to eliminate or mitigate such harm and where appropriate, to discuss the question of compensation.

In this regard the answer to the issue of Kura-Aras basin is not principally establishing a linear relationship between two concepts or main variables. As a result, the states sharing this basin can act based on the principles such as equality of sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual interests and good faith and through the use of the above principles can cooperate with each other in this complex system in order to reach an ideal utilization and proper protection of common water resources.

**Keywords:** Common Water Resources, Integrated Management of Water Resources, Kura-Aras Drainage Basin, Peace, South Caucasus.

## **Russia and Iran's Nuclear Case; the Approach to the Negotiations and Play a Role in the Acquisition Agreement**

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### **Abstract**

The nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran has become one of the major international conflicts and disputes over the past decade as the main theme of our country's foreign policy. It is also noteworthy that the same viewpoint did not exist in Iran's nuclear program in domestic and foreign spheres, and different approaches and perspectives have been raised about the nature of this issue. The Russian Federation is one of those actors that play a direct and indirect role in this matter.

This country has always had an important role in the continuity and extent of Iran's nuclear activities and its role cannot be compared with any other country. Conditions such as Russia's nuclear-technical cooperation with Iran, its interests in how our country's nuclear activities are operating and its specific conditions, such as its permanent membership in the Security Council and the geographic situation of Russia and Iran, caused to increase the importance of its role. But there are different views on the role and approach. One of the reasons for the divergent views on this issue is the adoption of different and two-way behaviors from Russia over various dimensions of Iran's nuclear file over the past two decades. Considering the importance of Russian role in Iran's nuclear case this article trying to answer the question why Russia's ambivalent and ambiguous approach towards Iran's nuclear program is adopted?

To answer this question, it is necessary to pay attention to the material and identity dimensions shaping the principles of Russia's foreign policy. In response to the research question, the hypotheses generated that Eurasianism identity discourse assumes roles such as "great power", "regional superpower" and "nuclear superpower" for Russia. As a result, Russia has been cooperating with Iran to develop its nuclear energy program on the one hand, and on the other hand, it has been preventing a remarkable progress of Iran's nuclear technology, while opposing to measures such as military action to avoid severe weakening of Iran, since a nuclear Iran will be a

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powerful regional rival for Russia. Any military strike against Iran or undermine its goals could possibly result in turning this country into a base for U.S.'s in the southern borders of Russia. Each of these situations is in conflict with Russia's foreign policy main roles. The research to advance his hypothesis uses the analytical method and the library resources and benefited interview.

Since the beginning of the disagreement over Iran's nuclear program, Russia has been pushing for an effective role in this issue as an international conflict under the influence of the effort to acquire the role of a great global power. But the two other roles of Moscow, namely, superpower and regional superpower, have imposed a framework on Russia's role in Russia and its mechanisms for dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue. This is how the Russians strongly oppose the militarization of Iran's nuclear program and do not want their nuclear monopoly broken up in the region. It has also opposed any possible increase in Iran's power as a potential competitor in the region. The two other concerns of the Russians, which shaped the two-way approach of the activist, were the beginning of a war against Iran or Iran's proximity to the west. Since each of these two situations also has consequences for Russia, so too to avoid these two situations, mechanisms such as accompanying sanctions against the use of a military option or creating conditions for the reciprocity of the negotiating solution have priority.

It can be stated that Russia's approach to Iran's nuclear program can be explained by considering these mechanisms: Russian nuclear doctrine and Iran's nuclear program, the potential increase in Iran's capability and Russia's superpower role in the region, preventing any military strike against Iran and preventing its friendship with the west. The elite of the foreign policy apparatus of Russia has been trying to make the most of the interest in the subject of Iran's nuclear negotiations as one of its foreign policy issues, which has been linked to other issues, and follow their desired roles in a better way. In this regard, in recent years, it has used this as a means of engagement, confrontation or chaos to the West, even in relation to other issues, and while continuing its nuclear cooperation with Iran, they agreed to adopt sanctions against Iran. In assessing Russia's compliance with the sanctions against Iran for these reasons, it should be noted: Rejecting the Russian proposal by Iran to resolve nuclear disputes during the 2011 negotiations, Moscow's motivation to show its legitimate image in the international community, stop the progress of the Iranian nuclear program.

With regard to the nuclear deal, conditions such as concerns about unilateral action by the United States against Iran and the benefits of lifting sanctions against Iran have led Russia to be enthusiastic in the resumption of talks, despite the initial escalation of sanctions against Iran, with the United States, over the past few years. Of course, Russia continued to strive for its priorities, such as extensive oversight of Iran's activities, along with the removal of trade restrictions. Despite Russia's disputes with the west, Both



Russia and the United States have directed their policy on preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Therefore, working with Washington to achieve this goal is still meaningful for Moscow. So, to achieve this goal, Russia was inclined to advance negotiations. Another issue is the restoration of Russia's image in the nuclear talks. It should also be noted that Russia's real ability to create a barrier to a nuclear deal was not enough strong. The nuclear deal's implications have also been a major issue for Moscow, which provided Russia with Iran with much more nuclear and commercial cooperation.

**Keywords:** Eurasianism, Foreign Policy, Iran, Iran Nuclear Deal, Iran Nuclear Negotiation, Iran Nuclear Program, Russia.