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Address: Institute of Political and International Studies , Shahid Aghaei St.,Shahid Bahonar Ave
Tehran.

P.O.Box: 19395/1793

Email: centralasia_quarterly@ipis.ir

Tel:+982122802671-75

Fax: +982122802649

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Russia and Regionalism in Eastern and Central Europe

Javad Shafaghat Nia Abad¹
Reza Ekhtiari Amiri²

According to the history of European diplomacy, Russia's security hinges on its strategic influence in Central and Eastern Europe. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia's strategy to regain its position and security in Central and Eastern Europe raised concerns among countries in the region. In this regard, the Ukraine crisis in 2014 and the annexation of Crimea by Russia posed serious challenges to the security of the region and Europe as a whole. Consequently, countries in the region turned to forming regionalism patterns characterized by an anti-Russian stance to balance against Russia's power and influence. The Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 further aligned and synchronized anti-Russian behaviors in multilateral regional frameworks. Considering these factors, the question arises: How has anti-Russian regionalism in Central and Eastern Europe threatened Russia's national interests? The research hypothesis posits that anti-Russian regionalism in Central and Eastern Europe has threatened Russia's national interests and security through the political, military, and economic convergence of the regional countries. The research findings indicate that developing strategic relations among Central and Eastern European countries through tripartite cooperation triangles, regional organizations, and multilateral initiatives aimed at balancing against Russia has created military-security, political, and economic threats to Moscow's national interests in the region. The research method is qualitative with an analytical-explanatory approach, using the realist theory of balance of power to explain the subject.

▪ **Keywords:**

Regionalism, Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, National Security, Balance of Power.

¹. PhD student in International Relations, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Mazandaran University, Babolsar, Islamic Republic of Iran. javad.sh.28968@gmail.com

². Responsible author and Associate Professor of International Relations, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Mazandaran University, Babolsar, Islamic Republic of Iran. r.ekhtiari@umz.ac.ir

Central Asian Security and the Five Plus One Initiative (2015-2024)

Sakineh Hashemi¹
Ali Reza Sheikh Mohammadi²

This study examines the impact of the C5+1 Initiative on Central Asia's security structure from its establishment in 2015 to 2024. The main objective is to analyze how this initiative has influenced patterns of security cooperation and competition in the region. The theoretical framework combines Regional Security Complex Theory, the concept of securitization, and reference group theory, enabling a comprehensive examination of the region's security dynamics. The research methodology is based on qualitative content analysis of official documents and reports and a review of secondary sources including academic articles and analytical reports. Findings indicate that while the C5+1 Initiative has brought about changes in the region's security structure and increased strategic options for Central Asian countries, it has also created challenges in maintaining their independence of action. Although effective, this initiative has not played a decisive role in shaping the region's security future. The increasing competition among great powers in the region has formed complex security dynamics that require intelligent management by regional countries. Results suggest that the future security structure of Central Asia will be shaped by a complex interaction between cooperation and competition, with the C5+1 Initiative potentially catalyzing this interaction. The long-term success of political and security initiatives in Central Asia depends on addressing the region's real needs, balancing the interests of great powers with the independence of regional countries, strengthening intra-regional cooperation, and developing domestic capacities.

▪ **Keywords:**

C5+1 Initiative, Central Asia, Regional Security, Security Cooperation, Great Power Competition.

¹. Instructor, Department of Political Science Payame Noor University, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.
Email: s.hashemi@pnu.ac.ir

². (Corresponding Author and Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science Payame Noor University, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. Email: alireza_sh@pnu.ac.ir

Russia and the Annexation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia

*Ali Mousaei¹
Enayatollah Yazdani²*

Russia's military attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and the annexation of the four regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia to the Russian Federation is considered the largest military conflict in Europe after World War II, which explains why the military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine and the annexation of these regions to the Federation makes it necessary. Therefore, the main purpose of this article is to answer the questions firstly, why Russia decided to attack Ukraine and annex Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia to the Russian Federation and secondly, what are the causes of the spread of the crisis and the success of these annexations? In response to this hypothesis, the reason for Russia's decision to attack Ukraine and annex Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia to the Russian Federation was to eliminate the threats caused by Ukraine's possible membership in NATO, also, the changes in the common values and norms between Ukraine and Russia during the crisis and the historical, linguistic, ethnic-racial and religious commonalities and links between the Russian society and the societies of these regions have played an important role in the spread of the crisis and the success of annexations. To answer the research questions, the qualitative method of multiple case studies has been used. The data was also collected in a library method and analyzed with a descriptive-analytical approach in the conceptual framework of the theories of balance of threat and constructivism. The findings of the article show that both material and immaterial factors played a role in Russia's military attack on Ukraine and the annexation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia into the Russian Federation.

▪ **Keywords:**

Balance of Threat, Constructivism, NATO, Russia, Ukrainian Crisis.

¹. Ph.D. in International Relations. University of Isfahan. Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran. al.mousaei@gmail.com

². Professor of International Relations, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran - Associate Professor of Middle East Studies, School of International Studies, Sun Yat-sen University, Zhuhai, China. eyazdan@ase.ui.ac.ir

Hybrid Warfare from the Russian Perspective (2012-2024)

*Hossein Kamalzare¹
Fathollah Kalantari²*

Abstract

Hybrid war has a high importance in the foreign policy of countries, and, the majority of countries seek to make maximum use of this concept to secure their interests. Therefore there is a need to deeply examine the understanding of countries (especially powers) from this concept. For this purpose, explaining the hybrid war from the perspective of Russia, as one of the most important powers of the current international system, is of special importance for the I.R. Iran. The main goal of the research is to discover and explain Moscow's understanding of the concept of hybrid warfare. This applied research was done using an exploratory-inductive method. In addition to its documentary tools, which consist of previous literature and Russian documents, this research has also used field tools with a statistical population of 30 people. This research shows that due to extensive investment and special attention to the hard and soft components of power, Russia now has the highest military, security, and cyber capabilities and has made significant progress in the media, economic, and political sectors. This has significantly increased Moscow's initiative to repel hybrid threats and countermeasures in this area and has made hybrid warfare an important tool in the relations of this country. Hybrid warfare is a very vital concept in Russian security documents, and the identification of hybrid threats and maximum preparation against them is one of the most important security priorities of the Kremlin.

▪ **Keywords:**

Hybrid warfare, Hybrid Threats, Hybrid Potential, Russia, Hybrid Confrontation.

¹. MA, International Relations, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.
Hosseinkamalzare95@gmail.com

². PhD in Strategic Defense Sciences, Associate Professor of the 19th Grade of the Higher National Defense University. Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. Hosseinkamalzare95@gmail.com

Nowruz; A Common Ground for Iranian and Turkish Cultural Diplomacy

*Ali zare*¹

*Mohammad Kazem Sajjadpour*²

Nowruz is one of the ancient rituals that is celebrated every year at the beginning of the spring equinox in Iran and the countries affected by the Iranian civilization as well as Turkey. Nowruz is a cultural phenomenon and can be a key element for connecting the countries that organize it. As two neighboring countries, Iran and Turkey have always had social, economic, and cultural relationships with each other. One of the most important common cultural elements between Iran and Turkey is the ancient Nowruz. The question of the present article is what are the similarities and differences between Nowruz in the two countries of Iran and Turkey how is the role of Nowruz in the cultural diplomacy of the two countries evaluated and what are the common cultural lines between Iran and Turkey. It seems that according to the importance of soft power and cultural manifestations, Nowruz can help to deepen cultural relations between Iran and Turkey. The ceremony of welcoming Nowruz, house shaking, Haft Sin table, buying new clothes, and seeing and visiting relatives are among the common features of Nowruz between the two countries. From the point of view of differences, Nowruz in different parts of Iran and Turkey has differences regarding how to hold the ceremony and the anthropological differences that have been mentioned. The research method is using library resources and collecting data from articles, and books, and examining them in a descriptive-analytical way.

▪ **Keywords:**

Nowruz, Iran, Turkey, Soft power, Cultural Diplomacy.

¹. PhD student of Iranology, Iranology Foundation, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. alizareparslion@yahoo.com

². Responsible author and professor at the School of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. smksajjad@yahoo.com

Turkey's Objectives in the South Caucasus

Hossein Fattahi Ardakani¹

The South Caucasus is a very important region that has a significant place in the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century. The wars in Ukraine and Karabagh provided a unique opportunity for Türkiye to review its new strategic perspective. Following the implementation of the trust-building project with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, Turkey has adopted a multifaceted strategy to establish stability and balance. The current research, by applying the constructivist theory, seeks to answer the question, what are Turkey's economic, political, and military goals in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia? The findings of the research show that Turkey has a multifaceted strategy to achieve financial goals (access to the consumer market, investment and mastery of energy lines and ensuring energy security), political and strategic (expanding the sphere of strategic influence and geopolitical in the region and the international environment) and military and security (changing the military and security balance of the region by assisting strategic allies). The result is that following the change of geopolitical realities in the Caucasus, Turkey is trying to increase its geopolitical weight in the world by applying a multifaceted strategy while reducing the role of its competitors, Russia and Iran in the region and by finding a way to improve relations with Armenia. Change and promote international multipolar order.

▪ **Keywords:**

Türkiye, South Caucasus, economic, political, and military goals, multifaceted strategy, structuralism .

¹. Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ardakan University, Ardakan, Yazd, Islamic Republic of Iran. h-fattahi@ardakan.ac.ir

Women; Peacebuilding and Peacekeeping in the South Caucasus (1991-2024)

Fahimeh Khansari Fard¹
Moslem Karamzadi²

Transitioning from conflicts and establishing peace directly relates to gender equality in the peacebuilding arena. This means that just as war and crisis affect the lives of all human beings - regardless of their gender; Justice requires that all people participate in the process of establishing peace and ending crises. On the other hand, the increasing use of women in terrorist organizations shows the need to pay attention to this neglected part of the peace-building process. Researchers in the field of war and peace believe that in many cases, the failure in the peace-making process is due to the lack of presence or the weak presence of women in this process. Meanwhile, many believe that the main burden of conflicts is on the shoulders of women, and using their prominent social role will greatly help the peace-building process. Therefore, today peace and transition from conflicts are tied to gender equality. Therefore, the main question of this research is, how have gender and women been affected in the transition from conflicts in the South Caucasus region in the years after independence? The evidence shows that the women of the South Caucasus have been able to participate in the processes of peace-building and peace-keeping by strengthening the perception of their outstanding role in this path along with the change in the views of the post-independence political institutions regarding their ability in the path of peace-building. However, a mixture of strong dominance of patriarchal institutions and norms in the society, lack of self-confidence in women to participate in official peace processes, and little effect of informal organizations on the peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes in this region have caused women to still not achieve their true position in the process of creating a post-conflict society and therefore previous crises and wars will continue. Examining the role of women in the transition from the post-independence conflicts in the South Caucasus in the context of the theoretical literature on gender, war, and peace with Analytical-Descriptive and Historical methods confirms this hypothesis.

▪ **Keywords:**

Gender, Peace-building, Peace-keeping, Post-Conflict Societies, South Caucasus.

¹. PhD in International Relations, Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran. (fkhansarifard@yahoo.com)

². Assistant Professor of Department of Political Science, Payame Noor University ,Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran (mkaramzadi@pnu.ac.ir)

Religion in the Strategic Culture of Iran and Russia

Sarem Shiravand¹
Zahra Pishgahifard²

Strategic culture is the quintessence of the attitude of elites and society towards the concept of power and its use in the world and surrounding environment. The indicators of strategic culture are influenced by four main sources, including religion and ideology, the structure of the international system, geography and geopolitics, and historical experiences. The question of the article is that how the influence of religion and ideology was on the strategic culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation and What are the similarities and differences between the both together? The hypothesis of the article is that the Russian Orthodox discourse and the Shia Islam discourse, by shaping the Russia and Iran strategic perception, has defined the boundaries of their thinking and behavior in a way that has acquired a quasi-divine status. The most important common dimension of the religion role in the strategic culture of these two countries is "Determining collective identity and demarcation of identity" and "Strengthening the sense of exceptionalism" And the most important differences are based on "geopolitical expansionism vs justiceism" and "Inspirationism and semanticism vs profit-oriented pragmatism and materialistic goal" and "ethnic nationalism vs Islamic internationalism. In this article, the research method is Explanatory-analytical and the data was collected through a library.

▪ **Keywords:**

"Religion", "Strategic Culture", "Strategic Perception", "Identity", "Foreign Policy".

¹. Phd student of Political Geography, University of Tehran, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.
sarem_shiravand@yahoo.com

². Corresponding author and Professor of Political Geography, University of Tehran, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. zfard@ut.ac.ir