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Power Games in the South Caucasus and Iran-Armenia Relations

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Abbas Maleki²

The political, geopolitical, and security developments in the Caucasus region over recent decades have profoundly affected relations among the countries of the region and their neighbors. This study examines the consequences of the new security dynamics in the South Caucasus for Iran–Armenia relations. Drawing on Regional Security Complex Theory, the paper analyzes recent developments from two main dimensions: first, the changing role and historical influence of Iran in regional equations; and second, the impact of Azerbaijan’s recapture of Karabakh and Armenia’s pivot toward diversifying its strategic partnerships. The findings indicate that Tehran–Yerevan relations, increasingly shaped by a shared perception of threat from the Azerbaijan–Turkey axis and the implications of the Zangezur Corridor, have shifted from a predominantly cultural–economic character toward more pragmatic cooperation. This cooperation has manifested in joint efforts such as the development of the North–South Corridor in opposition to the Middle Corridor and the Zangezur Corridor, as well as the establishment of alternative partnership networks.

▪ **Keywords:**

Geopolitics, Armenia, South Caucasus, Regional Security Complex Theory

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The New Geo-Economics of the Caspian Sea: From Resources to the Corridors

Habibollah Malakouti Far¹

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent states along the Caspian Sea, this landlocked body of water has become one of the most complex and significant geopolitical and geo-economic arenas in the 21st century. The Caspian is no longer recognized solely for its vast energy reserves; it now functions as a “geo-economic axis” at the center of intense competition for control over Eurasian trade arteries. This study argues that the contemporary importance of the Caspian lies in its role as an arena of both competition and cooperation regarding transit corridors. This silent battle is fought primarily through railways, modern ports, and highways, which serve as the main instruments of regional and trans-regional actors seeking to reshape the map of power, influence, and global trade. The research employs the theoretical framework of neoliberal institutionalism and uses a descriptive-analytical method supported by the author’s field experience.

▪ **Keywords:**

Caspian Sea, Neoliberal Institutionalism, Eurasia, Transit Corridors, Ports, Energy, Transit.

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New Pathways to Integration: Linkages between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union

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China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) represents a distinct paradigm from the post-World War II Atlanticist strategy, emphasizing sustainable development, economic connectivity, and multilateral cooperation. It positions itself as an alternative to security-centered approaches in Eurasia's geopolitical landscape. This article explores the goals, functions, and implications of integrating the BRI with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)—two major non-Western regional integration projects led by China and Russia—for the future of Eurasian regionalism. A comparative analysis reveals that despite differing institutional logics and strategic frameworks, their convergence can create an effective platform for enhancing economic, security, and institutional cooperation in Eurasia and serve as a foundation for a transition toward a multipolar global order. The findings suggest that this integration not only strengthens economic and infrastructural linkages but also contributes to redefining the international order by countering Western unilateralism and shaping a new economic-security architecture across Greater Eurasia. Utilizing a historical-comparative methodology and relying on library and online sources, this study examines the logic behind this integration and its influence on emerging economic-political structures in Eurasia.

▪ **Keywords:**

Belt and Road Initiative, Eurasian Economic Union, Economic Integration, Eurasia, China.

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China and the Russia-Ukraine War: From Ambiguity to Balancing

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The Ukraine crisis, triggered by Russia's large-scale invasion, ranks among the most significant geopolitical developments of the 21st century. It has deepened tensions between Russia and the West while contributing to the emergence of a new global order. This study investigates China's response to the Russia-Ukraine war. The central hypothesis is that China has adopted a multifaceted and deliberately ambiguous policy aimed at strengthening ties with Russia while maintaining strategic balance vis-à-vis the West. Drawing on defensive realism, the research employs an analytical-explanatory qualitative method based on library and online sources. The findings reveal that China has leveraged the crisis to challenge U.S. influence in the Asia-Pacific, weaken Western unity, and expand strategic cooperation with Russia in economic, energy, technological, and security domains.

▪ **Keywords:**

China's Foreign Policy, Ukraine Crisis, Russia, Balance of Power, Strategic Ambiguity.

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Environmental Crises in Central Asia and Sustainable Development

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Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Central Asia has faced severe environmental challenges—including the drying of the Aral Sea, industrial pollution, and political tensions stemming from uncoordinated management of shared water resources—while pursuing economic reconstruction. This study examines how the environmental situation in Central Asia can be explained in light of water scarcity and the shared use of transboundary water resources. The central assumption is that uncoordinated exploitation of natural resources, particularly the waters of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins, has been a primary driver of environmental crises and a major obstacle to sustainable development. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach within Thomas Spragens' four-stage methodology, the research finds that water scarcity, industrial pollution, soil erosion, and climate change seriously threaten the region's environmental sustainability. The path to sustainable development requires enhanced international cooperation and the establishment of effective joint institutions.

- **Keywords:**

Central Asia, environment, sustainable development, water crisis, regional cooperation, Spragens' methodology.

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Sanctions, BRICS, and the Eurasian Economic Union

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Majid Tavassoli ²

In the contemporary international system, economic sanctions constitute one of the primary foreign policy tools employed by Western countries to influence the political and economic behavior of target states. Beyond their direct effects on the economies and domestic politics of sanctioned countries, these measures also reshape international relations and promote regional cooperation. This article examines the extent to which Western sanctions (2012–2024) have contributed to strengthening BRICS and the Eurasian Economic Union. The main hypothesis posits that these sanctions have altered trade and economic patterns within these organizations and accelerated the development of economic mechanisms independent of the West. Using a comparative-analytical method based on documentary and historical data, the study concludes that Western sanctions—particularly following political and economic crises in member states—have acted as a catalyst for increased economic, trade, and political cooperation between BRICS and the EAEU. However, significant challenges remain in the areas of internal integration and resource management.

▪ **Keywords:**

Western sanctions, BRICS, Eurasian Economic Union, regional organizations, economic cooperation, foreign policy

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Energy and the Republic of Azerbaijan's Relations with the European Union

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This study explores the dual role of Azerbaijan's energy strategy toward Europe in enhancing the country's geopolitical position and reinforcing the domestic legitimacy of its government. By leveraging its abundant Caspian Sea oil and gas reserves through major projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor, Azerbaijan has positioned itself as a key player in European energy security. The central research question addresses how this energy strategy contributes to both Azerbaijan's geopolitical standing and its internal political legitimacy. The hypothesis argues that through a realist foreign policy approach and the instrumental use of energy resources, Azerbaijan has strengthened its position in Eurasian and European energy architecture while using energy revenues and partnerships to bolster regime stability. Despite pressures from Russia and Turkey, and the repercussions of the war in Ukraine, Baku has successfully pursued pragmatic multi-vector diplomacy. The study employs a qualitative methodology within the realist framework of international relations, drawing on secondary sources including scholarly articles, institutional reports, and statistical data up to 2025.

▪ **Keywords:**

Energy, Republic of Azerbaijan, European Union, Realism, Energy Security.

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Turkiye, Central Asia, and International Social Capital

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*Asghar Hasanvand*²

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent states in Central Asia, Türkiye has established itself as a significant regional actor over more than three decades. This study examines Turkey's regional engagement through the lens of "International Social Capital" theory. Using a policy analysis method and drawing on library resources, the research addresses the following question: What role has international social capital played in advancing Turkey's foreign policy and its position in Central Asia? The hypothesis suggests that by leveraging international social capital, Türkiye has expanded its influence and deepened its relations with the region. The findings indicate that by emphasizing normative and cultural affinities, Türkiye has built extensive networks with Central Asian countries, thereby enhancing its strategic credibility.

▪ **Keywords:**

Central Asia, Türkiye, International Social Capital, Network Actor, Influence.

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Russia, India, and the Multipolar World

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This article examines the strategic cooperation between Russia and India within the context of the emerging multipolar international order. It argues that both countries seek to challenge the U.S.-led unipolar system through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, particularly within BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The study highlights how structural divergences between Russia and the United States, and between India and the United States, have fostered convergence of interests between Moscow and New Delhi. It also analyzes China's role as both a balancing factor and a complicating variable in this triangular relationship. The article demonstrates that Russia–India cooperation in defense, energy, finance, and technology enhances their strategic autonomy and contributes to the gradual redistribution of global power.

▪ **Keywords:**

Russian Federation's India's Multilateral World's Putin's Modi.

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Pottery and the Cultural Connection between Iran and Anatolia: A Study of the 2nd–8th Centuries AH

Mehdi Kazempour¹

This study investigates the cultural and artistic exchanges between Iran and Anatolia through ceramics from the 2nd to the 8th centuries AH (8th–14th centuries CE). During this period, political relations, trade networks, migration, and artistic interactions under the Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ilkhanid empires created deep connections between the two regions. Ceramic production served as a key indicator of these exchanges, reflecting the transfer of styles, technologies, and cultural identities. The research identifies shared ceramic types and techniques and analyzes the role of trade routes and the movement of artisans in this process. Employing a descriptive-analytical approach based on library and electronic sources, the findings show that several ceramic traditions—including sgraffito, slip-painted, lusterware, mina'i, lajvardina, and turquoise-and-black painted wares—were produced in both regions. While sharing technical and decorative features, they also developed distinct local characteristics. Trade routes (especially the Silk Road), migration of artisans, political changes, and Chinese influences played crucial roles in these exchanges. Iranian ceramic traditions significantly shaped Anatolian pottery, particularly during the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods, resulting in distinctive hybrid styles.

▪ **Keywords:**

Iran, Anatolia, Islamic Ceramics, Cultural Exchange, Seljuks, Ilkhanids, Lusterware, Mina'i Ware, Silk Road.

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