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Minilateralism in Eurasia: A Flexible Approach to Regional Challenges

Jalil Bayat[1]

This study examines why states in Eurasia have in recent years turned to establishing minilateral pacts alongside institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union. The research hypothesis is that these pacts emerge primarily as complementary mechanisms in response to the limitations and sluggishness of multilateral institutions, enabling states to respond to regional threats and opportunities more quickly, in a more targeted manner, and at lower cost. Using a descriptive-analytical approach based on document review and case studies, the research examines the structural, security-geopolitical, and economic factors shaping these pacts and their differences from multilateral institutions. The findings show that these pacts, particularly under conditions of institutional gridlock, provide greater capacity for effective and flexible coordination among states.

- **Keywords:**
  Multilateralism, Minilateralism, Eurasia, Regional Pacts, Regional Cooperation

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From "Just War" to "Existential Threat": Frameworks of Russian Media in Covering the War against Ukraine

Danyal Rezapour[1]

Russia's current policy toward Ukraine exemplifies regionalism and re-territorialization based on geopolitical considerations and the redefinition of regional identities. The Kremlin, utilizing media, seeks to produce and consolidate its desired narrative of the conflict. This article analyzes legitimation strategies in Russian media discourse in 2022 using a descriptive-analytical approach and qualitative method. The hypothesis posits that Russian media, by simultaneously employing strategies of moral evaluation/altruism, authority/voice of experts, hypothetical future, mythopoesis, and rationalization, have legitimized the war discourse. Findings indicate that moral evaluation—centered on the "Just War" myth and Russia's image as "savior"—has been the most frequent and dominant pattern. This research focuses solely on media discourse analysis and linguistic-symbolic legitimation strategies, not on measuring the material components of national power.

- **Keywords:**
  Legitimation, Media Discourse, Just War, Special Military Operation, Russia and Ukraine.

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The Prospects for Dispute Resolution Between the United States and China: Perspectives from International Law and the English School

Zeinab Zarei[1]
Rahmat Haji Mineh[2]

"The escalating disputes between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, as the world's two preeminent powers, have assumed broad dimensions, encompassing various political, economic, security, and ideological spheres. The findings of this article indicate that international law, by providing legal frameworks and mechanisms, can play a pivotal role in managing and mitigating these tensions. Focusing on concepts such as sovereignty, non-interference, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and commitment to international treaties can offer strategies for de-escalating tensions and creating a basis for cooperation. At the same time, examining the role of international organizations, multilateral diplomacy, and the capacities of international arbitration and judicial adjudication demonstrates how these tools can be utilized to manage disputes and achieve sustainable agreements. Despite existing challenges, international law remains a vital instrument for regulating international relations and preventing the escalation of conflicts. Strengthening adherence to legal principles, developing dispute resolution mechanisms, and promoting dialogue and cooperation can contribute to reducing tensions and establishing a foundation for peaceful coexistence between the U.S. and China.".

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Kazakhstan's Multilateral Foreign Policy: Balancing and Managing Interactions in Central Asia

Seyed Mohammad Hossein Akramian[1]
Ali Akbar Talebi Matin[2]

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has pursued a strategy of balanced multilateralism as the cornerstone of its engagement with both Eastern powers—China and Russia—and Western actors—the United States and the European Union. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology and drawing upon library-based sources, this study investigates the underlying rationales that informed this strategic orientation and evaluates its operational dimensions in relations with these four principal actors. The central hypothesis maintains that Kazakhstan's foreign policy is predicated upon the principles of multilevel indivisible mutual interests, generalized organizing principles, and reciprocal engagement. The findings demonstrate that, by synthesizing independent, interactive, pluralistic, and smart approaches, Astana has successfully institutionalized balanced multilateralism as an efficacious instrument for maximizing national interests and preserving strategic autonomy within regional and international structures.

- **Keywords:**
  Kazakhstan, Balanced Multilateralism, Eastern and Western Blocs, Central Asia, Eurasia.

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The Soft Power of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Geopolitical Balance in the South Caucasus

Seyed Morteza Hafezi[1]
Seyed Amir Niakouei [2]

Soft power has become an important component of foreign policy in the South Caucasus. This study examines how the Islamic Republic of Iran can leverage its soft power capabilities to counter the expansion of relations among Türkiye, Israel, and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the region. The research employs content analysis of documents, sources, and secondary data covering the period from 2010 to 2024, based on the theoretical framework developed by Nye and Pape. The research hypothesis posits that the application of Iran's soft power through strengthening legitimacy and persuasive power can constrain the expansion of these cooperative relationships. Accordingly, four balancing strategies are examined: denial of territorial access, entangling diplomacy, demonstrating resolve for balancing, and delegitimizing the hegemon. The findings indicate that Iran can strengthen its position within the security architecture of the South Caucasus by leveraging shared cultural and historical ties, religious diplomacy, and regional institutions.

- **Keywords**:
  Soft Power, South Caucasus, Cultural Diplomacy, Balance of Power, Regional Relations.

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Transit Diplomacy in Eurasia: A Comparative Study of the Iranian Route and the Trans-Afghan Railway

Jalal Malakootifar[1]

Landlocked Central Asian countries depend on transit infrastructure, border procedures, and cross-border arrangements to access global markets. The war in Ukraine and heightened risks along some Eurasian routes have increased interest in diversification, but not all northern routes have become unusable. Using a qualitative comparative approach, this article examines southern access through Iran's Bandar Abbas and Chabahar ports alongside the proposed Trans-Afghan Railway to Pakistan. Geoeconomics and complex interdependence frame an assessment of four criteria: cost and time, infrastructure readiness, operational security, and political and financial sustainability. The comparison is necessarily asymmetric. Iran offers an operating network, established port capacity, and observable performance data, although Bandar Abbas and Chabahar differ markedly in operational readiness; sanctions, insurance and banking restrictions, border delays, and rail gauge breaks constrain the value of existing infrastructure. The Trans-Afghan project remains at the feasibility-study stage: the July 2025 framework agreement and its February 2026 ratification authorize a study, not construction or binding financing. Reported cost estimates have risen from about US$4.6 billion to over US$7 billion, while design capacity and transit-time targets remain projections rather than observed performance. Operational security for the Trans-Afghan route cannot be ranked conclusively: no shared security institution has been established, and the corridor's continuity depends on Pakistan–Afghanistan relations and on construction in difficult terrain. Iran's principal risks are financial and sanctions-related; the Trans-Afghan project's principal risks are institutional and foundational. The Middle Corridor and Caspian routes enhance diversification but do not substitute unconditionally for southern routes: their advantage lies in resilience and choice, not in absolute cost or continuity superiority. The article concludes that Iran's defensible short-term advantage is greater readiness for current use, not proven superiority in

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cost, delivery time, or security. The Trans-Afghan Railway could become a complementary or competing option for some trade flows if financing, cross-border connections, security arrangements, and reliable operations are secured. Diversification can reduce dependence on a single route, but only where alternatives provide usable services at acceptable costs.

- **Keywords:**
  Central Asia; Geoeconomics; Transit Diplomacy; Chabahar Port; Trans-Afghan Railway; North–South Corridor; Complex Interdependence; Middle Corridor; Landlockedness; Regional Connectivity

A Comparative Study of the Behavioral Models of the Emerging Powers China and India in Their Interaction with Iran

Mohammad Younes Bahadori[1]
Mandana Sajjadi[2]

Given the growing prominence of emerging powers—particularly China and India—in shaping contemporary international and regional developments, evaluating the foreign policy trajectories of these two nations is paramount for analyzing prospects of cooperation within the global architecture. This study undertakes a comparative inquiry into the behavioral paradigms of these two rising Asian powers in their engagement with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Such an understanding is imperative, as Iran—mindful of evolving systemic dynamics—has implicitly anchored a "Look to the East" orientation within its strategic agenda. Owing to its irreplaceable geostrategic position bridging the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf, and Central Asia, Iran commands a distinctive standing in the calculus of these powers.

The central research question asks: What behavioral models have China and India pursued in their interactions with Iran from 2015 to the present? Grounded in a hypothesis-testing framework, this study draws upon the theoretical model of the "behavioral patterns of emerging powers" alongside a comparative documentary analysis. The primary findings reveal that since 2015, both China and India have converged upon a "pragmatic and cooperative" behavioral model toward Iran. Stripped of ideological divergences, this shared approach is underpinned by four principal pillars: 1) the pursuit of extensive economic interests; 2) the safeguarding of energy security to meet surging domestic demands; 3) concerted efforts to preserve regional stability in West Asia; and 4) geopolitical calculations regarding regional power balances.

Nevertheless, the critical comparative insight of this research lies in the modalities of implementation. The findings demonstrate that this pragmatic behavioral framework is executed by the People's Republic of China with markedly greater coherence, decisiveness, and institutional continuity than by India. This divergence delineates distinct trajectories for Iran's future cooperation with each power, necessitating a granular analysis of the

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opportunities and challenges shaping Iran's foreign policy toward these two vital Asian actors.

- **Keywords:**
  Foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran; emerging powers; China's behavioral model; India's behavioral model.

Analysis of Key Components in Governance Structures with a Focus on Nuclear Energy: A Case Study of Russia

Kamal Kaviani[1]
Mohammad Azimzadeh Arani[2]

Energy governance encompasses the institutional frameworks, processes, and mechanisms that regulate interactions among actors across the energy value chain. Utilizing a documentary research method and a qualitative case study design, this article examines the governance architecture of the Russian Federation's nuclear energy sector, delineating the distribution of roles and competencies among key stakeholders. The findings demonstrate that Russia has institutionalized a tripartite functional separation across three primary echelons: policymaking, regulation, and service provision (operation). At the strategic policymaking level, the Presidential Administration, the State Duma, and line ministries formulate macro priorities; at the regulatory tier, specialized supervisory and antitrust authorities ensure technical and market compliance; and at the operational level, the State Atomic Energy Corporation (Rosatom) and its subsidiaries execute commercial and technical mandates. This structural differentiation minimizes institutional friction, reinforces safety and market oversight, and enhances operational efficiency. Consequently, this three-tiered governance paradigm and the rigorous delineation of institutional mandates provide salient policy lessons for reforming and streamlining Iran's nuclear energy governance.

- **Keywords:**
  Russia, Nuclear Energy Governance, Policymaking, Independent Regulation, Service Provision, Rosatom.

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The Role of Energy in the Development of Turkey-Azerbaijan Relations

Amirhosein Mehdipour[1]
Rahbar Talei Hour[2]

This article examines the role of energy in the development of relations between Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan. It asks: How does energy, as a driving force, contribute to the development of the two countries' economic, political, and security relations, and how can it steer those relations toward greater convergence? Drawing on the theory of interdependence, the article hypothesizes that increased cooperation in the energy sector can strengthen economic, political, and security ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan. The findings indicate that, given its distinctive geopolitical position as an energy transit hub, Turkey seeks to expand its ties with neighboring countries, particularly Azerbaijan. Rich in energy resources, Azerbaijan also plays a key role in supplying energy to Turkey and exporting its resources there. The continuation and deepening of cooperation in this sector can further develop bilateral relations in other areas. This applied study adopts a descriptive–analytical approach.

- **Keywords:**
  Energy, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Interdependence.

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The Status-Laden Construction of Threat in Russian and Ukrainian Official Discourse

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Vali Golmohammadi[2]

This article examines how Russian and Ukrainian official discourses connect material and security threats to historical and identity-based narratives, framing them in terms of status, recognition, and collective existence. It explores how these discursive configurations represent compromise and concessions and legitimize confrontational policies. Drawing on Richard Ned Lebow's cultural theory of international relations, the analysis focuses on *thymos*—the concern with honor, respect, and humiliation—as well as status and recognition; collective dignity is treated as a supplementary normative category. The study adopts a qualitative, comparative, document-based approach and employs directed thematic analysis to examine 50 official documents—25 Russian and 25 Ukrainian—issued between 2014 and the end of 2022. Meaningful statements or clauses served as the units of analysis, and the documents were coded manually using a six-component analytical framework and ten operational codes. The findings reveal shared patterns as well as substantive differences. In the Russian corpus, historical continuity, perceived historical grievance, and claims to great-power status are associated with representations of threats to national security and Russia's role in its surrounding region. In the Ukrainian corpus, historical independence, sovereign equality, political agency, and collective dignity are associated with representations of invasion, occupation, and threats to national survival. In some documents from both corpora, compromise or concessions are framed as betrayal, surrender, appeasement, or humiliation, while confrontational action is presented as defensive, morally justified, or historically necessary. References to negotiations, ceasefires, prisoner exchanges, and political solutions, however, show that this pattern is neither uniform nor deterministic. The article identifies a discursive pattern through which security concerns acquire status- and identity-related

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meanings. Its conclusions concern the justificatory logic of official discourse; they do not establish the causes of the war, decision-makers' private motives, audience acceptance, or causal effects on military decision-making.

- **Keywords:**
  Thymos; Russia–Ukraine War; Recognition; Status; Cultural Theory of International Relations.