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## CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS IN IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY 1991-2020

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**Abstract.** This article comes to present the stages of Iran's foreign political strategy in its relationship with the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus from 1991 to 2019, and the importance of these relations in expanding Iran's interests and ensuring its economic and political interests in the region.

In this case, the article clearly shows that Iran's interests are becoming a serious problem in the Central Asia and the Caucasus to the rapid growth in demand for natural fuels. In fact, Central Asia and the Caucasus are the regions where the geopolitics and competition between the United States and Iran are most influenced by their vast energy resources and strategic position.

The author conclude that Central Asia and the Caucasus are of particular interest to the Iran, while Central Asia and the Caucasus is one of the best options for Russia, China, and the United States.

**Key words:** Energy, Iran, United States, Russia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Competition.

**Introduction.** After the disintegration of the Union of the Soviet, Iran has sought to build bridges of political, economic, trade and cultural relations with neighboring countries in Central Asia, and that the exploitation of the historic opportunity that followed the collapse of the Union Soviet early nineties of the last century, in order to get out of political isolation after more than twenty years of its revolution, and benefiting from these geopolitical shifts in repositioning at the regional level, so that it becomes a country with great influence and leverage in the Greater Middle East region as a whole. Iranian decision-makers were keen to convince the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus that friendship with Iran is more worthy than clash. Politics and diplomacy have been used as a means to build and develop relations with these countries in order to dispel their concerns, in addition to paying attention to the development aspects and providing assistance, as Iran, by virtue of its location and history, has seen it as the closest power and has the right to play a major and leading role in the Central Asia and Caucasus region. And on the other hand, the countries of that region were trying to plead with regional and international powers in order to disengage from the Soviet Union, and these countries have found regionally in Iran their goal, but the ideological engines of the Iranian regime, which include exporting the revolution and victory to Shiite groups in neighboring countries, penetrating societies and influencing their policies, raised the fears of these countries and made them wary of full openness to Iran, but rather mobilized some of these countries make their efforts to confront any illegal Iranian policies.

Through a review of the literature, the Central Asia and Caucasus region is considered one of the strategic regions, as this region is characterized by geostrategic importance through its geographical location and important resources. It is located on the shores of the rich Caspian resources on the one hand, and form on the other land routes and extensions of gas pipeline and oil from the Middle East and the Caspian towards. China Node and of them towards the sea of a black and Turkey and the Mediterranean Sea, and the recent direction of the Arabian Gulf through Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan towards the ocean Indian. In addition, this region is rich in oil, water and precious metals.

Central Asia and the Caucasus after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new independent states in the region aroused great interest on the part of both the closest neighbors and the largest countries in the West and the East, given the geopolitical and strategic resource opportunities for the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, as the Islamic countries saw in the independence of the republics of Central Asia the possibility of their return To the Islamic world, Iran's policy towards Central

Asia and the Caucasus after 1991 was cautious, as it tried to prevent the United States and Turkey from entering the region, and maintained close relations with Russia, but this Iranian-Russian axis was subjected to many pressures, especially after the imposition of US sanctions on Iran. Consequently, Iran has worked to develop a more effective policy to be able to get out of the sanctions of the United States of America, so that isolating Tehran does not put such an obstacle in front of the historical opportunity for Iran to become a joint regional power, and Iran has tried in recent years to impose itself on the economic and cultural scene in Central Asia and the Caucasus. And in this research, we will discuss the most important strategies that Iran has practiced towards the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus to be a major player in the region and what The impact of this on Iran's relationship with the major countries (Russia, China, and the United States of America) and the future of these alliances and strategies on Iran in political and economic terms.

**Materials and methods.** Because the research includes the historical, geographic, political and economic aspects, the multiplicity of levels of analysis from international units to regional relations to an international format, and the overlap of analysis variables, it required employing the historical approach, the descriptive approach, the case study approach, the inductive approach and the comparative approach. The political phenomenon and the field of political science, as it is a flexible subject that draws from all other sciences and knowledge approaches.

The historical curriculum provides us with revealing the implications of the phenomenon, i.e. how it was, how it became and how it will be. Therefore, the historical method was adopted to know the historical implications of the Central Asia and the Caucasus region and its complex history so as not to make an epistemological break with the events and evidence that the region knew. As for the descriptive method, it was employed to know all aspects of the phenomenon under study, and the analysis in order to mean with an accurate knowledge of the apparent and then predictable connotations. As for the case study methodology for the accuracy of the topic, it is a partial study of the Central Asia and the Caucasus region because of the importance it constitutes among the academic circles in studying and analyzing this topic. As for the inductive approach by which the parameters of the movement of forces behavior can be extracted. As for the comparative approach, which is the last, given the difficulty of conducting direct experimentation in the field of political science. And the fact that the human being is the subject of the study, it is complex and the statistical approach was not able to fully support the experimental approach. So the comparative approach was adopted that helps compare two things that may differ in the behaviors and directives of the countries in their external agendas were compared between them, but without comparing the difference in setting the goals of each party, so it was done. My employment to find out and compare the strategies of each player in the region from other players and the advantage that may differ from one party but not the other.

The study of international relations has contributed to standardizing the behavior of political units, and among the theoretical approaches that have made a significant contribution in the field of political science:

**Discussions.** The paper tries to look at Iran's foreign political trends toward the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus in the midst of all conflicts and alliances, the future of this strategy and its impact on the region in general and Iran in particular by answering the main research question:

What are Iran's foreign political strategies towards the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus from 1991 to 2020 to preserve its regional interests in the region?

The research attempts to arrive at Iranian foreign political strategies towards the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus through the following sub-questions:

- What is the geopolitical importance of the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus?
- What is the economic importance of the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus (energy and gas materials?)
- How did Iran deal with the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus during the stages of Iranian foreign policy towards the region, according to the political changes that the region and Iran underwent from 1991 to 2019?
- What is the future of Iranian relations with the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus according to the foreign interests and policies of the major countries and the countries concerned?

Consistent with the previous problem and the questions arising from it, the following hypotheses must be examined and tested:

- The countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus have geopolitical importance, as they are part of many conflicts that witness, from time to time, intense competition between international parties seeking to attract the region's interest and, in the end, to access its natural resources. The bilateral and multilateral economic and military agreements that are sought to be concluded with the countries of Central Asia are cited as clear evidence of competition for control of the region's resources.

- Iran realizes the importance of the region to it in making it play an important regional role and holds the keys to controlling the energy and natural gas transport areas in the region.

- Religious and sectarian culture plays a big role in Iran's relationship with the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, as it is one of the forms of control and hegemony.

- The strategic geographic location, and the religious basis of Iran, makes it a dominant regional power and a major player in the region, and it achieves its geopolitical interests.

- The intensity of international and regional competition in the Central Asian region stems from the clarity of the contradictory and different strategies of each country separately, due to the difference of interests and their opposition more than their convergence or compatibility.

**Results.** It is represented as a knowledge model with great contributions in international relations under the leadership of (Hans Morgenthau) which promotes analytical tools for classical realism in determining trends in the behavior of political units, where Power is considered for the realist paradigm such as Energy for physicists, the Power with which realistic analyzes are concerned is not conventional military force but National Power In its comprehensive sense of its material and non-material components and elements, and international politics, like other policies, is nothing but a struggle for power, in addition to their employment for the National Interest that is, to achieve the minimum goal of the foreign policy of each country, which is preserving survival, as the national interest coincides with the preservation of strong construction and together they form a single chasm, as well as the Balance of Power which means achieving global peace and security on the one hand and developing relations without disturbing the principle of balance on the other hand, and for "Morjinaw " that there are three motives for the human being: the motive of life, the motive of reproduction and the motive of domination in a world lacking resources that leads to the struggle for power, which is the Will to Power it shapes the nature of politics and war (Cynthia Weber, 2001: 13-23). Despite the persistence of classical realism for decades during the Cold War, it could not keep up with the developments occurring after its end. However, its analysis tools are still used by the major powers in implementing their external agendas. Therefore, this cognitive model must be examined and tested on the trends and behaviors of the major powers and the extent of the feasibility of using it so far, especially for a country like Iran that is trying to take its place among the major countries.

It is an extension of the Classical Political Realism and its leaders (Kenneth Waltz) appeared simultaneously with arrival of US President Jimmy Carter to power through his mortal theory in his dealing with the international community, as Waltz adopted in his traditional tools the concept of force to prove elements other than war channels and tried to link state power and possess elements such as (space Geographical location, physical and natural resources, population, degree of economic growth, military development and political stability) its aims to achieve the maximum possible of Security, which is linked to the element of fear, and the international conflict is the product of chaos, and the nature of the international system recognizes bipolarity in contrast to Classical Political Realism for its depending on the system of multipolarity, as Structural Realism indicates in the concept of Statism by granting the states the ability to form goals and interest, so I tried to drive the cognitive framework and employ them in our analysis of the topic to find out the extent to which the political units concerned with their studies employ realistic, structural tools in external trends. (Aydin, 2004: 1).

In the academic field, neoliberalism generally refers to the existence of three strands of neoliberal thinking, economic, social and political, which are taken equally from realism and to liberalism, and in particular the issues security, conflict and cooperation regarding the Neoliberalism Institutionism, the fundamental question of research is how to enhance and encourage cooperation in An international system characterized by chaos and shape competition between states, and on the other hand, the new realism and



the Neoliberalism Institutionism are both searching for an explanation of the behavioral regularity by examining the decentralized nature of the international system, and the Neoliberalism Institutionism recognizes that the creation of international agreement dictates that the ability of states to communicate and cooperate depends on institutions from the human condition, the state is at the center of its interpretation of international politics.

On the other hand, the Neoliberalism Institutionism is linked to an international system in which two basic conditions are met:

First: There must be mutual interest between state and other actors.

Second: That the change be in the degree of Institution GallizationIt exerts a powerful influence on state behavior.

At the same time, Kyuhen acknowledges that the possibility of organizing cooperation in the global political economy when there are common public interests that are already employed in the orientation of states, where the Neoliberalism Institutionism imposes the possibility of cooperation despite the chaos of the global system by analyzing the “repeated plight of the prisoner”, and “Market New models”, and on this basis, this knowledge model was employed through the study of economic and security institutions in our analysis of the issue and the extent of their conformity with the rational trend recognized by the Neoliberalism Institutionism theory) (Isard, 1975: 506).

The word (Hegemony) was originally used to describe the relationship between Athens and the Greek cities, and historically, the era of Roman domination is considered the most prominent example, but in the modern era of American hegemony (Pax Americana) which has prevailed since the mid-twentieth century on the basis that Hegemonic Power is who can impose its rules on the international system, and it is one of the popular theories to describe the status of the United States as a superpower in the international system, and who contributed to building this theory (Joseph Nye, Robert Keohan And the Suson Strange) The theory of dominant stability was conserved in the vision that the world is divided into specific issues and specific situations, on this basis, hegemony in the first part helps in the process of distributing power in a particular system, not only military power, and the second relates to the control of a certain idea or group of assumptions of the global level. This theory and some of its assumptions were employed on the extent to which the great powers (America) enjoyed imposing their hegemony on the world, in front of the likely current of the return multipolarity in front of the Russia and China on the international stage (Anwar Mohamed Farag, 2007: 397-404).

### **Geopolitical Importance of Central Asia and the Caucasus**

There is no agreement in the geopolitics literature about the definition of Central Asia, expect that it is located in the heat of the Asian continent far from the open oceans and seas. As for the geographical boundaries of the region, it is possible to distinguish between two main currents: The first is the one that defines Central Asia narrowly geographically. It limits it to some newly independent republics from the Soviet Union in the heart of Asia, namely: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. It thus excludes the Republic of Kazakhstan from the definition. This current is represented by one of the greatest specialists in Central Asian affairs “Wheeler Geoffrey”. As for the second current. which is represented by “Britannica Encyclopedia”. It defines Asia more geographically, It argues that Central Asia is the region that extends east of the line extending southeast of the Urals and Caspian Seas to northwest China and Mongolia, and extends a longitudinally from southern Siberia in the north to northern and northern Iran and Afghanistan in the south. This geographical area includes the group of countries and regions, which includes for Mongolia, the South of Siberia and the northern parts of Afghanistan in Iran, in addition to the five newly independent republics from the Soviet Union in 1991, namely: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan (Sami Al-Salami, 2016:51, 51.)

The geopolitical region that includes both Central Asia and Caucasus is one of the most important energy production regions in the world, whether it is related to oil or natural gas, which explains the increasing interest in it, and its classification within the areas of complex strategic competition, and energy is the core and focus of the competition, both in terms of The desire to enter the energy production areas there, or to control the important routes to transport oil and gas.



This region is characterized by its extension in the depth of human history, culturally and Civilized, and it had a distinctive role in Islamic history in particular and in the world of in general, when it was a sensitive corridor for trade and cultural movements within the ancient Silk Road, but it was subject to containment and annexation in the era of Tsarist Russia and then the Soviet Union, but the end The Cold War allowed the region's countries to re-emerge as political, cultural and social entities distinct from their surroundings, so Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan emergent for existence.

From a geopolitical point of view, Central Asia is a natural extension of the Caucuses, and part of "Eurasia", which is considered "Heartland", Where experts are classified as a major component of what is known as Central Eurasia, so geographically representing the five Central Asian republics as well as the Third South Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, what is known as the "Eurasian Central", located the countries of this region, east and west of the Caspian Sea basin rich in oil and gas (Ibrahim Ararat, 2007: 67, 124-126).

Therefore, the main geostrategic importance of Central Asia is evident in two main factors: the discovery of significant reserves of energy resources, and secondly, being a central passage for oil and gas pipelines, and the transpiration routes that depart from them in all directions linking them to China, Russia, Europe and the Caucasus region and across the Caspian Sea to the Indian Ocean.

The region of Central Asia and the Caucasus was considered part of the former Soviet Union during the twentieth century and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, five Islamic Republic in the region, which are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, became independent countries. At present, the area covers an area of 5 to 6 million kilometers and has a population of more than 60 million people (40 million Muslims).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the strategic importance of these countries doubled due to their proximity to hot spots in Asia in which major international and regional powers struggle, as well as their proximity to the Arab Gulf region and Iraq, as well as a traditional rivalry between Russia and the United States to extend their hegemony over the region in 1991. These countries began to look to practice foreign political relations with regional and global neighborhood; Central Asian countries are continental countries that represents the land depth or the wild heart. From a geopolitical point of view, Central Asia is surrounded by regional players eager to form relations with these countries under an excuse filling the geopolitical vacuum caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. And the geopolitical orientations of the regional players towards the countries of Central Asia differ, but they are organized into four directions:

- Geopolitical orientation: Russia is at the forefront of the players motivated by security perceptions and politics in the region, as these countries represent the soft region in the southern Russian security belt.

- Geostrategic orientation: It is linked to the entry of non-regional strategic player into the region with geostrategic determinants within the framework of the Atlantic Commission project in its American form, and within the framework of the global strategic control and control game of the US unipolar system aimed at controlling areas of geopolitical importance to manage global hegemony.

- Goeconomic orientation: It refers here to the role of China, Iran, India and Turkey in view of the energy and commercial opportunities that these republics present.

- The geocultural orientation: which is contested by the identity, ethnic and religious perceptions of the countries of the region towards two major geopolitical axes, Iran and Turkey, and their politicians intersect within a major geostrategic game run in the region between strategic players within the strategic triangle formed in Central Asia, by which we mean Russia, China and the United States of America.

The countries of Central Asia had no choice but to welcome international competition as long as it removed from the double political and geographical confinement of Russia, through which it could export its wealth to obtain revenues that support its independence. This competition is likely to increase in quantity and quality, and it is exacerbated in the light of globalization with its openness and freedom of movement through Borders, which leads to an increase in security threats and challenges, but this region exposed to intense international competition, and this exposes Iran to entering into conflicts with major countries such as Russia, the United States and China, in its attempt to obtain regional status and economic gains in the region.

### **Political Geography of Central Asia and the Caucasus**

Central Asia as a geographical region is considered an open door towards the Gulf region and the East in general, and whoever controls it can control the east, and the countries of the Caucasus: are: a wide mountainous area of much elevation that is difficult to traverse, with few passes, extending over a distance of 12000 km to reach between the Black and Khazar seas (Caspian), which is the boundary between Europe and Asia, while Central Asia is that region adjacent to the Caucasus (Muhammad Abd al-Fattah Mohsen, 2000:90-94).

The strategic importance of these countries has doubled due to their proximity to hot spots in Asia, in which major international and regional powers struggle, most notably Afghanistan and Iran, as well as their proximity to the Arab Gulf region and Iraq, in addition to the traditional competition between Russia and the United States of America do extend their hegemony over the region. And it helped to enter this region in the circle of international polarization due to the threats and security challenges it suffers from the weakness of its defense capabilities. Beginning to understand and analyze the nature of the conflict in the Central Asian region, it is necessary to analyze the geographical location of the region and its countries and its importance. The level of the region or the global level and in light of the consequences of the collapse of the former Soviet Union from the emergence of some states and their independence, the geographical importance of these countries has emerged, as we will explain later.

In view of the geographical location, we note that the main problems of Central Asian countries are that it is an isolated region, as it is surrounded on the north by the Russian Federation and surrounded by huge areas of dry land from the east and west, and on the south it is surrounded by a series of natural obstacles, mountains and seas, as well as political obstacles such as areas of political conflict. Or countries-imposed sanctions on them, and this means that the natural resources of this region are besieged, geographically or politically, and both the Caucasus and Central Asian countries face difficult political challenges. Some of them face unresolved wars or latent and hidden conflict. Other are constantly developing their system, which leads to increased possibilities of changing laws and political orientations, and work can be terminated due to the presence of new geopolitical facts. In addition, the main technical obstacle that Central Asia countries face in transporting oil in the pipeline infrastructure in the region, because the pipelines in the region are old and pass through countries that have interests and want to have an influential role in the region, and one of the most important pipelines is the “Baku-Ceyhan” pipeline, through which it is expected to pump about one million barrels per day, or about 1.2% of production. This is why it is called the “Project of the Century”. The giant oil pipeline begins its journey near the capital, Baku, on the coast of the Caspian Sea, passing through the middle of Azerbaijan from east to west, and then crosses Georgia almost in the middle of it from east to west, before heading south to split the Anatolian Mountains. Turkish diagonally from the northeast to the south to the city of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean coast (Parvizi, Houweling, 2001: 106). The geographical location takes its importance in the country in several ways, which may be directly related to the natural resources, or the importance of the geographical location in the regional and international context.

According to theories that give great consideration to the geographical location, Central Asia is part of the heart of the world, according to the theory of “Halford Mackinder”, which the Germans adopted a lot and tried to benefit from in the Second World War. It seems that such trends were what prompted Tsarist Russia to take care of it and extend its political influence over it, as the former Soviet Union also focused his attention after, which was considered geopolitical and strategic, with its wide area and isolated areas that play a role in the military maneuvers

The region has now turned into an area where oil explodes and is rich in natural resources, and has become attractive to the eyes of the United States, Russia and China, all of which aspire to play a political and economic role that fills the void after the collapse of the (former) Soviet Union, and many American companies have rushed to open offices in the region since 1992. From here it is possible to analyze one of the most important causes of international conflict and competition over the Central Asian region, as the political geography of the region has contributed, whether in terms of its geographical location in a vital political area in the international system, especially with regard to the major countries, or regional powers affecting the region, or in terms of natural resources owned by the area.

Where the term Central Asia is used geographically to denote the farthest regions of the Asian continent away from the maritime regions, surrounding the continent, Central Asia includes the region extending north-south from Siberia to the Himalayas, which separates it from the Indian steppe regions, and in the east-west direction the area extending from the Aral-Caspian line to Mongolia and China. This region is one of the most distant geographical ranges from the oceans in the world, and therefore it is characterized by terrestrial characteristics, has also become geopolitical regional and a center for the expansionary domains of the Eurasian empires.

The American vision during the Cold War carried almost the same political atmosphere as that based on Spykman's definition of the peripheral belt. The two approaches reflecting the vision of a dominant global power with a sea weight in the surrounding oceans towards the wild deaths of Eurasia. Central Asia has represented an arena for the concentration of land power, and a transit region above which the rivalry of land and sea powers is intensifying.

According to the geopolitical perception of Russia's leaders, Central Asia is considered a part of the Middle East located between the Near East extending from Morocco to the Arabian Gulf, and the Far East overlooking the coast of the Pacific Ocean, and the bodies of the Middle East and Central Asia begin, according to this definition, in the west of the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf. And it extends east to Mongolia and as far south as the Indian subcontinent. This division was not only used as a geopolitical separating error, but was also used as a geocultural error, separating the Ottoman Empire from Iran and India. Alexander von Humboldt used the term "Central Asia" for the first time in 1829. After this term became widely used in German and French literature, he moved to the Russian language. The term was used to denote all Asian lands that do not have sea coasts, while the term Inner Asia was used to describe an ethnic geo more than a geopolitical description, and it is used to denote an area between latitudes (40 and 50) to include Turkestan and Mongolia.

Russia controlled the Eurasia axis, geographically and geopolitically in the nineteenth century, in the face of Britain, in the context of what was known as the Great Game in the second half of the twentieth century against the United States in the context of the Cold War, while was the most important strategic anchor of the former Soviet Union. In the south and east, the most important change in the geopolitical situation of Central Asia with the end of the Cold War was the emergence of an important geopolitical vacuum with the analysis of static geopolitical balances, especially the Central Asia region. This vacuum allowed for the crystallization of an important playing field for the regional players in their Eurasian policy, as well as for the players belonging to Central Asia, and it also resulted in the emergence of a new strategic standard that activated the dynamics, perhaps for the first time in two hundred years. The process of rebuilding Central Asia from a geopolitical dynamic point of view is the subject of a wide debate, as global, continental and regional balances enter into this process, and influence is exchanged between them, and the influence that countries will have in this region will remain dependent on the role these countries play in the geopolitical rebuilding process for the area. As for the historical, geographical and cultural factor, Central Asia constitutes geographically the focal and central dimensions of the Eurasian land mass from the seas. Central Asia has been linked by a strong dynamic relationship, politically and culturally alike, with the local civilization located in the seaside regions in the largest land mass on Earth. The transitional culture of Central Asia was subject to direct, mutual and multifaceted influence from the stable Indian, Persian and Chinese civilizations in addition to the Russian culture. New combinations through their blending of these stable civilizational regions, and sometimes the influences emanating from these regions exposed the cultural, political and economic structure of Central Asia to radical variables, the areas of political and cultural rule created by the Seljuks in Iran, the Ghaznavids and Papists in India, the Mongols and Kubilai in China and Tamerlane in the extended steppes. Even Moscow is a product of cross-influence with Asian centers (Ahmed Dawood Agloo, 2011:494).

And when we use the traditional definitions of the historical and geocultural axis for this mutual influence, we find that this axis is formed above the meeting ground of the Iranian, Indian and Turanian regions. The arena that includes South Central Asia and Afghanistan has played the role of an arena for refraction of the transit areas between Iran, Toran and India, and Alexander the Great extended in this square his Eurasian hegemony, which started from the south of the Black Sea and the Sea of Hazar, and

Mahmoud Ghaznawi established in this square the line of concentration for the destinations from Turan to India, and the armies of Genghis Khan opened the road towards Iran and India, after he imposed his control on that square as well, and after the conquest of Delhi in 1197, these three historical and geocultural lines turned into a center of Islamic civilization, which resulted in relations between Iran, Toran and India taking a characteristic of leadership within Islamic civilization. There is an astonishing aspect to that internal rivalry that extended up to the colonial period, which is that almost all of the elements that participated in this competition within the region belonged to the human element of Turanian origin. The political hegemony established by Tamerlane is one of the results of the largest expansion campaigns of centrally located Asia towards Russia in its north.

And after this expansion made Samarkand the center of the Eurasian civilization, it formed a gigantic domination domain with a Central Asian center and a Turanic nature.

When looking at the region from the angle of Islamic civilization and Turanian political hegemony, we find that the competition between Bayazid Timur, whom some consider as internal competitiveness, constitutes a clear example of the clash between the Iranian-Indian Turkic regions and the Mediterranean regions, the Balkans and Anatolia. After the political hegemony achieved by Tamerlane, Central Asia was distributed among the various ruling families to highlight the internal competition within the structure of Islamic civilization in the form of hegemony in the Balkans and Anatolia and the Safavids in Iran and the Papacy in India. The mutual influences between the stable civilizational influences of these countries and the ruling human race of Middle Asian origin led to the emergence of the urban hub cities such as Istanbul, Konya, Isfahan, Samarkand, Bukhari, Delhi, and Lahore (Isseman, 1993:22-34).

In spite of the tension that married the Ottoman-Iranian, Iranian-Uzbek and Indian relations due to sectarian differences, relations between the Ottomans and the Uzbeks in general and against the Iranian and Russian forces continued in a good manner, and the relations between the Ottomans and India against the Portuguese and the English, and we can see the features of the Russian factor in relations. Between the Ottoman Empire – Central Asia in the Astra Khan campaign and the Don Volga Canal project, this could be considered a strategic reaction to the descent of Sukullo Muhammad Pasha to Asta Khan. The features of the Safavid factor can also be seen in the Ottoman relations that lasted from the reign of Sultan Selim II until the reign of Sultan Murad IV.

The most important characteristics of Central Asia can be summarized as follows:

1. The form of the emergence of many countries in the Central Asian region a shift politically important in the system of international, and had a political and economic dimensions is not confined to the local level of these countries, but beyond that the international level

2. These countries are located geographically at the center of the confluence of civilizations as mediating between East and West, one of the exchange methods of historical between Asia and Europe, it separates Russia to the north and the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent to the south and is thus considered the average area of the empires that control the heart of the world as defined by the world *Algiobolitk Mackinder*.

3. Ethnically, the Central Asian region includes different nationalities, whether at the level of the region as whole, or at the level of states, but it is distinguished by the superiority of the Turkish and Iranian elements, and this is evident in the fact that the languages spoken mostly are Turkish or Persian

4. On the ideological level, the region has known, since the collapse of the (former) Soviet Union, a strong tension between two main currents, the secular current and the Islamic fundamentalist current. Among the most important ruling parties in the Central Asian republics are the following: Kazakhstan: the *Nour al-Watan Party* led by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, and Uzbekistan: the *Democratic Party* led by President Islam Karimov. Tajikistan: The *People's Democratic Party*, led by President Imam Ali Rahman. Turkmenistan: The *Turkmen Democratic Party* (ex-communist) is the only one and is led by Gurban Guli Berdymukhamedov. Kyrgyzstan: *Social Democratic Party* is led by President Almaz Beck.

5. The state of similarity between some political regimes in Central Asian countries and some Arab countries whose political regimes changed as a result of the popular revolutions in 2011 raises questions about the possibility of similar revolutions, as some Asian countries are no less, if not more, that



what the Arab region suffers from corruption and tyranny. It suppressed civil liberties and violated human rights. The ruling authoritarian scene is frequent in the two regions.

**Geopolitical and Strategic Importance of Central Asia.** Central Asia has been known since the nineteenth century as a region of conflict and competition between world powers, including the Russian Federation of course and Great Britain, which controlled most of the world, and the conflict over the region is due not only to the presence of oil and gas in the closed Central Asia region, but to many strategic factors that have lefted the processes of disintegration and decomposition of the countries of the former Soviet Union, and then the emergence of a group of states that lacked many of the elements of state-building, and suffered from political and economic problems and at the same time had large natural resources, especially energy resources, which resulted in conflict and competition between some major powers to find a political role for it in the region and try to play a role in political transitions.

Analyzing the dimensions of competition for the Central Asian region requires identifying the geopolitical and strategic importance of the region, as this helps to analyze the goals that major countries seek to achieve, as follows:

**Geopolitical Importance of Central Asia and the Caucasus.** Halford Mackinder presented a theory that is considered one of the most important geopolitical theories in his book (Democratic Ideals and Reality) Mackinder sees through his theory which he called (The Geographical Pivot of History) that three quarters of the globe is covered by the water of the seas and that the land only occupies a quarter of its area. He also noted that the unity of the seas and their connection are some justification for calling it the Global Ocean. Yt also noted that the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa are (World Island) It occupies two-thirds of the entire land, then Mackinder referred to the fulcrum of the global island, which he called the heart of the earth, meaning that area that extends from the Volga River basin to eastern Siberia, in addition to part of Highlands of Mongolia.

There is another geopolitical theory presented by a professor of American international relations, Spykman, who drew attention to the great geopolitical importance of the land of the margin, which he called (Rimlands) which include: Eastern Siberia, China, Korea, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, and he believed that “controls the ground periphery (Rimlands) dominates Eurasia and has the heart of the earth, and controls Eurasia controls the world”, and represent the Asia Central is an important part Concerning the Asian continent and the international community, by reviewing the natural characteristics of Central Asia, we can see their importance, and some of these characteristics can be observed as follows (Mamdouh Mahmoud Mansour, 2005:51)

1. The regions of Central Asia are known as the countries beyond the river Gihon River and also known as West Turkestan to distinguish it from East Turkestan, which has come under Chinese control, and these regions include the basins of the Sihon and Gihon rivers and the Aral Sea.

2. Central Asia forms a trapezoid bounded on the south by the Himalayas, on the southwest by the Pamir Hill, on the north by the mountains of Altari, Yapluni and Stauffori, and on the east by the Ganjan and Connor Mountains.

3. Central Asia, along with the six provinces, is a large part of Khorasan. It is located in the republic of Turkmenistan, which is bordered to the west by Iran and south by Afghanistan, and to the east by Uzbekistan, and to the north, by the northwestern part of Kazakhstan and the Caspian Sea.

4. There are some valleys in the Central Asia region that are bordered by a mountain range, such as: Tien Shan and Altai. Among the most important rivers that run in are Sihon, Gihon, Atrak and Mirghab (Ahmed Fouad Metwally, 2000: 47).

5. The Aral Sea (Sea of Khorezm), located in the Central Asian region, is the largest lake in the continent of Asia, to the south and west of Uzbekistan, and to the north by Kazakhstan.

6. There are no ports in Central Asian countries on open seas or oceans, but some overlook closed seas such as the Caspian Sea that Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan overlook, or some lakes, such as the Aral Sea on which Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are located, or Lake Balkash. It is located in Kazakhstan, and Lake Issyk, which is overlooked by Kyrgyzstan, and thus all these republics are considered imprisoned and it can be said that they are imprisoned in double custody because their neighbors do not overlook open seas or oceans (Atai, Farhad, 2012:119-136). In order to overcome this

geographical situation as landlocked countries that can reach the high seas with the consent of Russia through the Volga Channel, which is under Russian sovereignty, and that connects the Caspian Sea with the Black and Baltic Seas (Stolberg, 2007: 28-29).

7. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Iran overlook the Caspian Sea, and Russia views the Caspian Sea as a shared sovereignty area for coastal countries, and the Caspian Sea region includes enormous wealth, as the Caspian Sea Project Director at the Cambridge Energy Research Foundation in the United States of America, Dr. Laurent Ruskas (sees that this issue has witnessed tremendous mixing and exaggeration in the media, as the estimated oil reserves in the Caspian Sea region are (200 billion barrels, and what has been proven so far between (25-30) billion barrels of oil and its condensates. There are great possibilities to achieve huge discoveries in the future, and it does not exclude any estimates regarding the existence of a reserve base in the region with a maximum of (50-75) billion barrels. According to the International Energy Agency, the oil reserves in the region are estimated between (15-40) billion barrels, which constitutes a proportion of (1.5-4%) of global reserves, while gas reserves are estimated at between (7-6) trillion cubic meters to (9.2) trillion cubic meters, in addition to (8) trillion cubic meters reserve it is possible parallels between – 6) (% 7 of the global reserves of natural gas. While another study indicates that the proven oil reserves from the Caspian Sea are estimated at (176.5) billion barrels, and this constitutes (17.1%) of the global proven reserves that can be extracted, and the same source indicated that the total gas reserves in the region amount to (14.5) trillion cubic meters, and this is equivalent to (9.7%) of the total natural gas reserves (Ramazani, 1992:393-412).

8. In addition to crude oil, the Caspian Sea region includes vast wealth of gold, copper, uranium, and other heavy metals. However, technical, economic, geopolitical and ethnic complications may impede the extraction of oil and gas reserves, in addition to the fact that the Caspian Sea is a closed lake area (surrounded by land on all sides.), which impedes the delivery of oil and gas to global consumer markets, and this means the necessity for major investment to create new infrastructure for export if Caspian oil is to reach the open seas, and thus transportation costs will be huge by global standards, which will negatively affect the economic cost of developing the riches of the Caspian Sea, not to mention the divergence of visions and conflict of interests, which make transportation a political problem as well as an economic problem. Since the independence of the oil states in Central Asia, especially the countries around the Caspian Sea in particular, and the openness of information about their oil wealth to the world, intense competition began between Western companies and international and regional powers over these discovered wealth, and it seems clear that there are two levels of competition, one of which is the position of international companies that are not very concerned. With regard to the political implications of extending the lines in one direction or another, and the other is the political and strategic positions of international powers, which in turn affect the positions of companies, in addition to the positions of regional countries that fear dependence of their oil on this or that power to one degree or another (Dikkaya, 2008:93-118).

9. Central Asia is a single geographic mass. In the north, Russia is bordering Kazakhstan, and to the east China is bordering Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and Iran is also bordering Turkmenistan. According to the British Encyclopedia, the region is a great inland sea, meaning that it is a large continental area, but it is confined, which makes its countries more affected by the conditions and situations of surrounding countries that represent for them a crossing of the open seas.

10. The important location of Central Asia, which connects Asia and Europe and the Middle East region, as it has been described as a link between East and West and bridge between Europe and Asia, or between Christianity and Islam (Mohammed Mr. Salim, 2001:208).

**Conclusion.** The geopolitical importance of Central Asian countries is related to their geographical location and its connection with the countries of Central Asia and the countries of the region or at the international level, while the strategic importance of the Central Asia region emerges from the fact that it connects Asia, Europe and the Middle East region, as well as processing large energy resources that qualify it to play a role in energy security. The international level, and Central Asia is one of the main regions in linking the West and East, in addition to that, the three countries that share the majority of the energy

resources in the region are closed countries and not open to the world, which makes them dependent on neighboring countries as a mediator to access global markets.

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## 1991-2020 ЖЫЛДАРДАҒЫ ОРТА АЗИЯ МЕН КАВКАЗ ИРАННЫҢ СЫРТҚЫ САЯСИ СТРАТЕГИЯСЫНДА

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**Аңдатпа.** Бұл мақалада Иранның 1991-2019 жылдар аралығында Орталық Азия және Кавказ елдерімен қарым-қатынасындағы сыртқы саяси стратегиясының кезеңдері, сондай-ақ бұл қарым-қатынастардың Иранның мүдделерін кеңейту және аймақтағы экономикалық және саяси мүдделерін қамтамасыз ету үшін маңыздылығы қарастырылған.

Сонымен қатар, мақалада табиғи отынға сұраныстың жылдам өсуіне байланысты Иранның мүддесі Орталық Азия мен Кавказда күрделі проблемаға айналып отырғаны анық көрсетілген. Шындығында Орталық Азия мен Кавказ АҚШ пен Иран арасындағы геосаясат пен бәсекелестікке олардың орасан зор энергетикалық ресурстары мен стратегиялық жағдайы ең көп әсер ететін аймақтар болып табылады.

Автор Орталық Азия мен Кавказ Иран үшін ерекше қызығушылық тудырса, Ресей, Қытай және АҚШ де үшін оңтайлы нұсқалардың бірі деп тұжырымдайды.

**Түйін сөздер:** энергетика, Иран, АҚШ, Ресей, Орталық Азия, Кавказ, бәсекелестік.

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## ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКАЯ СТРАТЕГИЯ ИРАНА В ОТНОШЕНИИ СТРАН ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ И КАВКАЗА

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**Аннотация.** В данной статье представлены этапы внешнеполитической стратегии Ирана в его отношениях со странами Центральной Азии и Кавказа с 1991 по 2019 год, а также важность этих отношений для расширения интересов Ирана и обеспечения его экономических и политических интересов в регионе.

При этом статья наглядно показывает, что интересы Ирана становятся серьезной проблемой в Центральной Азии и на Кавказе из-за стремительного роста спроса на природное топливо. Фактически, Центральная Азия и Кавказ – это регионы, где на геополитику и конкуренцию между США и Ираном больше всего влияют их обширные энергетические ресурсы и стратегическое положение.

Автор приходит к выводу, что Центральная Азия и Кавказ представляют особый интерес для Ирана, а для России, Китая и США представляется одним из лучших вариантов.

**Ключевые слова:** энергетика, Иран, США, Россия, Центральная Азия, Кавказ, конкуренция.



## МАЗМҰНЫ / ОГЛАВЛЕНИЕ

<b>Қ.Қ. Сәрсембина, М.М. Қозыбаева, Х.Б. Маслов</b> Саяси қуғын-сүргінге ұшыраған әйелдер (Ақмола облысы бойынша).....	4
<b>А.Т. Абдулина</b> Этнокультурные аспекты состояния казахской диаспоры в Тарбагатайском аймаке Суар КНР .....	14
<b>А.М. Әбікей, А.Ж. Утегалиева, Ж.С. Саурыкова</b> 1928-1929 жж. қазақ байларын тәркілеу науқаны.....	27
<b>К.Н. Балтабаева</b> Пидахмет Бобкин и его потомки .....	40
<b>Ж.Ж. Жеңіс</b> Моңғол империясының құрылу кезеңіндегі идеологиялық ахуал.....	56
<b>Ә.Қ. Шашаев, Н.Н. Құрманалина, А.Н. Қоңқабаева</b> Н. Сәбитовтың қоғамдық-ғылыми мұрасы мен өмірінің бастапқы кезеңі.....	68
<b>О.Х. Мұхатова</b> Халифа Алтайдың өмірі мен қызметі туралы архив деректері.....	78
<b>Ә.Қ. Бәкір, С.Т. Тайман, С.Т. Жарбулова</b> Мұстафа Шоқай және Әлихан Бөкейхан.....	92
<b>С.-Х.А. Жүсіп, Х.Б. Маслов</b> Исторические аспекты участия казахов в первой мировой войне.....	104
<b>С.А. Асанова</b> Малоизученные аспекты истории голода 1921-1922 гг. в Казахстане.....	117
<b>А.М. Dyab al-Noimat, М.А. Sultan Alafreet, Zh. Zhengis</b> United States-Russian conflict over wealth and oil in Central Asia and the Caucasus.....	128
<b>Kochiyev Elnur Rafik-Ogli</b> Comparative analysis of political repressions of Kazakhs and Ahiska Turks.....	141
<b>Элен Тибо</b> Многоженство в Казахстане.....	151
<b>А.Т. Капаева</b> Продовольственная политика советской власти в Казахстане в условиях «военного коммунизма».....	166
<b>А. Сманова, С. Шілдебай</b> Мұстафа Шоқай және шетелдегі ұлттық өкілдердің тәуелсіздік үшін жүргізген күресі.....	177

**Ш.Т. Булгауов, Г.Қ. Мұқанова**

Смағұл Садуақасовтың қазақстанды «кеңестендіру»  
туралы көзқарастары төңірегіндегі тарихнамалық дискурс..... 188

**И.Ю. Анисимова, Ф.С. Рамазанова, К.Б. Болатова**

История повседневности как направление исторических исследований:  
предмет, источники, методы..... 199

**A.M. Dyab al-Noimat**

Central Asia and the Caucasus in Iran's foreign policy strategy 1991-2020..... 211

**O. Kuanbay**

Comparative scientific analysis on the political and social situation  
of the Japan - Kazakh people in XVIII-XIX centuries..... 223

**S.K. Malabayev, M.M. Kozybayeva**

Features of hunger 1921-1922 in Kazakhstan and its consequences..... 232

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