

Russia's foreign policy towards Western governments And the United States in the Caspian Sea

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ABSTRACT

This article tries to analyze the orientation of the Russian Federation towards the Caspian Sea using the view of Elahe Kolaei. The main question is which of the influencing factors has the most impact on shaping Russia's foreign policy? Russia's approach to the Caspian Sea and its issues is strategic, as it seeks to use the Caspian Sea as a leverage to achieve its regional and international goals. The international system has the greatest impact on politics as Russia's foreign policy towards the Caspian Sea and it has been such that, Russia's foreign policy has faced a strategic transition under the influence of this factor. The first has been the transition of policy in economic from passive to active and the second has been the active transition of policy in military and security.

Keywords: Russia, Caspian Sea, International System, Strategic Approach

Introduction

Over the past decade, due to the identity of the crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the problems of its the transition period, the Moscow authorities have not been able to adopt a coherent and stable strategy with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). As a result of Moscow's inaction and confusion, the ground for strengthening divergent forces and the formation of pro-Western unions such as the GUAM should be provided from within this society. While Russia was plagued by its own internal problems, Western governments, led by the United States, encouraged regional governments to withdraw from Moscow's domination and to integrate into western political, economic, and security structures. The CIS enjoys a privileged geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic position, prompting the new Russian government to on one hand try to strengthen the CIS and on the other pave the way of weakening the Guam union, a potential rival to the CIS, as a tool for Western influence in the neighboring regions. In this regard, the Putin administration has made extensive moves that, in order to better understanding, it is first tried to articulate Moscow's goals of formation of the CIS, the reasons for its decline in recent years, the goals of the formation of the Guam union, and Russian President Vladimir Putin foreign policy to be investigated against the goals of the Western government in the Caspian region.

Research Methodology

In this article information is collected from books, internet searches, interviews, note-taking, journals, newspapers and academic dissertations and the method used was descriptive-analytical.

US strategy in the Caspian region

The Americans have always sought to diversify their oil resources for themselves and other major oil consumers, and to reduce their dependence on Middle Eastern oil. This idea prompted Washington to become more active in the Caspian region in the mid-1990s. Apparently, the extensive presence was to obtain an alternative to the Persian Gulf, while the interests of oil companies were also considered. Taking a closer look at such an idea, according to the International Energy Agency, the world's demand

for oil will increase from 70 million barrels per day in 1995 to about 92-97 million barrels per day in 2010. Rising demand for oil, on the one hand, and rising oil prices, on the other, have forced major oil consumers, including the United States—the world's largest oil importer (20.7 per day)—to work hard to find new alternatives. In this regard, the Caspian region has been in the spotlight of US officials since the mid-1990s. A report by the US National Interest Commission in July 2000 stated that oil would remain the most important commodity needed for the future of the world. The report added that more attention should be paid to create new sources of oil reserves in other regions instead of the Persian Gulf. The report also said that the most important new oil hub for global consumption is the Caspian region's oil reserves, which appear to be huge reserves discovered after the North Sea. In addition, US oil experts have rated the Caspian region as the largest oil potential outside the Middle East. In 1997, Sam Brownback, a member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, saw the Caspian Sea as a new opportunity for Washington, stating the United States has major interests in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus that besieged the sea. He added, the region was politically, economically and socially vital to the United States. Accordingly, the Washington administration considered the Caspian region as "vital resource" for the United States. "I cannot imagine a time when a region that is strategically more important than the Caspian Sea has suddenly emerged in our foreign policy," said Dick Cheney, who later became Vice President during Bush administration in 1998. In order to expand the US role in the Caspian region, the US Congress passed the "Silk Strategy" in March 1999. The main purpose of such a strategy was to prevent the republics of the region from coming under the control and influence of other powers. To this end, the US government announced a strategy that included the following:

- 1- Strengthening the independence and sovereignty of the countries in the region and establishing democratic governments against Russia.
- 2- Development of friendly relations and economic cooperation
- 3- Supporting the economic resources of American companies in the region

This strategy was the main position against the two governments of Russia and Iran. Russia, for historical and political reasons, is the only alternative to transporting oil from the Caspian region and could never miss such an opportunity. Instead, Washington sought to end Russia's monopoly on Caspian oil. Also, in terms of geographical location and having the necessary capabilities in the oil industry, Iran could be a suitable, short and cheap way to transfer Caspian oil to world markets. But due to long-standing political differences since the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1978, Washington tried to keep Iran out.

Richard Morningstar, Clinton's Special Adviser and Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State of US revealed in November 1998 that Washington's goal was to stop the monopoly of Russia in transporting oil and gas through the development of its pipelines that circumvent the country. He also stated that the other goal of the United States was to oppose any oil pipeline that passes through Iran or any other opportunity that allows this country to have more influence in the region; He added further that the aim was to secure the energy of the West by diversifying its energy resources, as well as by assisting its ally, the Turkish government.

Russia's goals in forming the Commonwealth of Independent States

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of fifteen independent republics, Russian leaders formed a "community" to secure their interests and prevent further collapse of the former structures in those republics. Further, Moscow extends its influence in December 1991 by forming CIS along with the two republics of Ukraine and Belarus. Eight countries of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and the Republic of Azerbaijan, immediately joined the union. The Republic of Georgia joined the union in October 1993 due to pressure from Abkhaz separatists and economic difficulties. Russia's goal in creating this union is as follows:

1) Securing economic benefits: The CIS member states are of great economic importance to Russia. One of the main goals of the Russian government, which is also mentioned in the union documents, is to create a unified economic environment, coordination in the transport system, freedom of movement of citizens and the establishment of uniform customs rules. At first, little attention was paid to this priority in Russian foreign policy, but from the mid-1990s, after the defeat of Western thoughts in foreign policy, strengthening the union became one of the country's most important goals as Moscow leaders realized

that the process of independence of the CIS member states and the change in the direction of their foreign, economic, transport and communication policy strategy to the west, east and south could significantly weaken Moscow's position both globally and regionally and deprive the country of rich reservoirs of energy and strategic important metals. Therefore, strengthening its position as a provider of economic and technological requirements of member states and preventing their convergence with Western structures, as well as the transit of energy resources of these republics to global consumer markets through oil and gas pipelines, turning the member countries into a good market for Russian goods due to their proximity.

2) Supporting Russians living in the CIS republics: Russians living in these republics hold key positions in the political sector, industrial-military complexes, armed forces, and security services, as well as play an important role in maintaining and sustaining Moscow's influence. The country is worried about the uncertain fate of Russians living in these republics and the continued expansion of their migration to its territory, especially from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan due to nationalist ethnic tendencies and their efforts to digest Russians within ethnic groups. Therefore, it tries to achieve its political goals in these republics through various means, including extensive diplomatic support, non-diplomatic arrangements, and sometimes threats.

3) Providing military-security interests: Another goal of the Russian government after the collapse of the Soviet Union is to try to retain the former CIS-joint military force. The purpose of this coalition was to establish such forces for peace and security in the region and to protect the common borders. In 1992, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Armenia signed the Collective Security Treaty in Tashkent to secure their interests and thwart US and NATO goals in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The presence of these forces and the maintenance of the country's military bases on the territory of the member states play an important role in maintaining Moscow's influence and securing its interests. Over the past decade, it has used its superior military power to force CIS governments to consider its own interests in its policies. (Including supporting insurgents there or fighting the Georgian government).

Therefore, Russia is trying to expand its activities to the territory of the Soviet Union by signing the Border Cooperation Agreement and prevent threats from entering its territory. It has so far signed border agreements with the Republics of Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and is working to persuade other republics to do the same.

Causes of divergence of CIS countries in the last decade

In the 1990s, there were several assessments of the CIS, but in any case, two points should be considered. The first round, which coincided with the early years of the collapse, its role in controlling the situation and the tensions resulting from the disintegration was very prominent, able to continue their normal life away from the chaos caused by the collapse—which is the natural happening of any country disintegration. But in the second round, which gradually saw some new political, security and economic parameters in these newly independent countries and caused the attention of other countries to these areas, led to the rapid development of relations between these republics and the outside world. The Soviet Union and international organizations to build political and economic infrastructure to be on the agenda of these countries. Thus, the despair of the leaders of these republics in promoting the economic welfare of their own people, the arrival of new political and economic powers that were more powerful than the Russians, the fear of Moscow's re-domination for the republics caused the role and importance of this union to diminish. To become an organization full of contradictions and differences, the result of which has been the emergence of two new organizations in the space of this union over the past few years.

1. Central Asia Organization which is composed of four countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

2. A union consists of the republics of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Uzbekistan with the name of GUUAM.

The shared feature of both unions is the absence of Russians in these unions.

Reasons Behind the formation of the GUUAM Union

The presidents of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova formed GUAM on the sidelines of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summit in Strasbourg on October 10, 1997. Uzbekistan also joined the four countries on the 50th anniversary of the founding of NATO in 1999; Since then, the union has become known as (GUUAM) by adopting the initials of country names. So far, these countries have signed agreements on security issues, bilateral economic cooperation, cooperation with NATO, as well as Caspian oil issues and its export through the East-West axis, and some customs tariffs. Among the reasons for the formation of this union were their common disillusionment with the efficiency of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the feeling of danger from Moscow's attempt to control this union. The goal of these governments is to reduce economic cooperation within the CIS and strengthen economic cooperation within the framework of GUAM, and from these governments point of view, Russia plays an imperialist role in the region and its involvement in creating regional and ethnic crises in Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan is quite obvious, and these countries have been trying to use alternative energy sources in Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, unlike other members that are dependent on Russia. In terms of security, GUUAM's goal is to deepen security cooperation outside the CIS and with Western security organizations such as NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Ukraine was the first country to participate in the NATO Partnership for Peace Initiative in February 1995; The plan was implemented by the Western countries at the NATO Summit on January 10, 1993, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in order to expand NATO's sphere of influence and pave the way for Eastern European, Transcaucasian, and Central Asian membership. With the exception of Tajikistan, most member states became members of GUAM and held joint military exercises in their homeland with NATO forces. In addition to extensive cooperation between the United States, Georgia, and Turkey in modernizing Georgia's military and strengthening its borders, Turkey has encouraged Georgia and Azerbaijan to participate in building the US-backed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline.

Putin's foreign policy towards the CIS

Russia's new foreign policy doctrine, the "Russian Foreign Concept," is to strengthen the convergence process in the CIS, expand bilateral and comprehensive relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States, and keep them economically dependent, especially on energy and communications. In the field of security, first of all, it must maintain control of the former Soviet borders while maintaining its constant presence in strategic areas, especially in critical areas. Second, directing and managing crises that may pave the way for Western influence; To take over and use them to control the foreign behavior of the countries in the region. An example of this is the policy that the country adopted in the face of the Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia crises. Third, to weaken the agents and unions that act as Western influence in the region. In this regard, the weakening of GUAM has become one of the important priorities of the country's foreign policy. Also, giving priority to determining the legal regime of the Caspian Sea is another program to prevent Western influence in this region. The Russian Federation, as the successor of one of the two superpowers of the Cold War in the new era, especially after the coming to power of Vladimir Putin, has always tried to play an influential role in the development of the international system and therefore to strengthen relations and cooperation he has worked with neighboring countries. It is based on the fact that in recent years, strengthening the regionalist approach has been one of the most important features of Russia's foreign policy, which is the formation and strengthening of the SCO mechanism, strengthening the Commonwealth of Independent States, and strengthening good relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Because Russia, as one of the founders of this organization, has always played a critical role in the Islamic expansion of Iran, India and Pakistan, as observer members in this organization, so they can play an active role in the level of defense-security and challenges in the region.

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