

International Politics of Caspian Sea Region –IR, 817
(Elective Course)

Course Description: The course will explore some significant security challenges in the region and the role of critical regional powers and international actors in shaping the geopolitics and security regimes in the region. By focusing on some significant ethnic and social conflicts in specific states and analyzing the shared traits as well as divergences in political processes across the region, it will identify some fundamental shifts taking place in the region. It will begin with exploring the historical debates on the geopolitical importance of the broader region (the 'Great Game' perspective), analyze the effects of its isolation during the Soviet years, and highlight the new strategic salience of the region. It will explore the centrality of oil and energy resources in shaping cooperation and competition among the states in the region, as well as the engagement of international actors (Russia, China, EU, and the US in particular) in the region. The likely impact of OBOR/BRI and CPEC on Central Asia's strategic dynamics shall be exclusively analyzed.

Course Objectives: This course aims to analyze the strategic dynamics of the Caspian Sea Region and five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) from historical (pre-Soviet and Soviet) and recent (post-Soviet) perspectives. In the introductory part of the course, the general geographical conditions of the region will be discussed; then, some of the most important historical developments that affected the region until the establishment of the five SSRs (Soviet Socialists and Republics) will be examined.

Learning Outcome: The course aims to equip students with:

- A general familiarization with the region's geography, history, politics, etc.
- A competent knowledge of how the local context, Russian and Soviet legacy, coupled with international actors, are defining the geopolitics, conflicts, and security framework in Central Asia.
- A critical understanding of processes driving regional cooperation or hampering it.
- An understanding of the impact of the transient world system on the region.
- A reasonable prediction of the region's future trends of security issues based on analysis of historical and current dynamics.

Course Content

Week 1:	Historical Background
Week 2:	Geo-strategic significance
Week 3:	Great Powers' interests
Week 4:	Regional and peripheral players
Week 5:	Geopolitics of the Region: Old
Week 6:	Geopolitics of the Region: New
Week 7:	'Great Game' vs 'New Great Game'
Week 8:	Energy Politics
Week 9:	<i>Midterm Exam</i>
Week 10:	Impact of OBOR/BRI on the region
Week 11:	CPEC and CARs
Week 12:	Internal security challenges
Week 13:	External security challenges
Week 14:	Opportunities for the region.
Week 15:	Regional Security Arrangements: CIS, CSTO, SCO, ECO etc.
Week 16:	<i>Final Exam</i>

Reading Material

- Gennady Chufrin (ed) *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).
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- Richard Pomfret, *The Central Asian Economies Since Independence*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Sergej Mahnovski, Kamil Akramov, and Theodore Karasik, *Economic Dimensions of Security in Central Asia*, USA: Rand, 2007.
- Gül Berna Özcan, *Building States and Markets: Enterprise and Development in Central Asia*, Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
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- Arnold J. Toynbee, *Between Oxus and Jumna*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.
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- Morten Anker, Pavel K. Baev, Bjorn Brunstad, Indra Overland and Stina Torjesen, *The Caspian Sea Region towards 2025*, Delft: Eburon Academic publishers, 2010.
- George Friedman, *The Next 100 Years*, New York: Anchor Books, 2010.

- Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*, Kent: Croom Helm Ltd, 1983.
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- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC]. 2012. *Opiate flows through Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia: A Threat Assessment*. UNODC Report.
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- Lewis, David. 2014. Crime, Terror, and the State in Central Asia. *Global Crime*, 15 (3-4): 337- 356.
- Glenn, John. 2003. *Human Security and the Disaffected of Central Asia*. *International Relations*, 17 (4): 453-475.
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- Jones-Luong, Pauline & Weinthal, Erika. 1999. The NGO Paradox: Democratic Goals and Nondemocratic Outcomes in Kazakhstan. *Europe-Asia Studies* 51 (7): 1267-1284.