

Strategic Dynamics of the Caspian Sea Region

- a. Credit Hours 3-0
- b. Course Code:SS-821
- c. Course Title

Strategic Dynamics of the Caspian Sea Region

d. 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 analysing 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), analyse 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 analysed.

e. Course Outcomes

The course aims to equip students with:

- A general familiarisation 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.

f. **Course Objectives**

This course aims to analyse the strategic dynamics of the Caspian Sea Region and five countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) both 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 Socialist Republics) will be examined.

g. **Course Contents**

- 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:** ***Midterm Exam***
- 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:** ***Final Exam***

h. **Recommended Readings**

- [Vinay Kaura](#), 'India and The Greater Caspian Region,' *Caspian policy Centre*, January 11, 2024, <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/guest-contributions/india-and-the-greater-caspian-region>.
- [Grace van Deelen](#), 'As the Caspian Sea Recedes, Tectonics May Help Shape Its Coastline,' Land subsidence and uplift determine where the Caspian Sea's coastline shifts the fastest,' *EOS*, 6 May 2024, <https://eos.org/articles/as-the-caspian-sea-recedes-tectonics-may-help-shape-its-coastline>
- **Vali Kaleji**, 'Decreasing Water Levels in the Caspian Sea: Causes and Implications,' [Analytical Articles](#) (October 13): 2023, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13769-decreasing-water-levels-in-the-caspian-sea-causes-and-implications.html>
- [Agha Bayramov](#), *Constructive Competition in the Caspian Sea Region* (Washington DC: Routledge), 2022.
- [Gennady Chufrin](#) (ed) *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).
- Peter Frankopan, *The New Silk Roads*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.
- McGlinchey, Eric. 2016. *Leadership Succession, Great Power Ambitions, and the Future of Central Asia*. *Central Asian Affairs*, 3 (3): 209-225.
- Bourbeau, Phillipe. 2015. *Security: Dialogue across Disciplines*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Introduction.
- Lewis, David. 2014. Crime, Terror and the State in Central Asia. *Global Crime*, 15 (3-4): 337- 356.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC]. 2012. *Opiate flows through Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia: A Threat Assessment*. UNODC Report.
- Peyrouse, Sebastien. 2012. *Drug Trafficking in Central Asia: A Poorly Considered Fight?* PONARS Policy Memo, 218.
- Baev, Pavel K.; Morten Anker; Indra Øverland; Bjørn Brunstad & Stina Torjesen (2010) *The Caspian Sea Region Towards 2025*. Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers.

- Gül Berna Özcan, *Building States and Markets: Enterprise and Development in Central Asia*, Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- 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.
- Heathershaw, John. 2009. *Post-conflict Tajikistan: the Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order*. London: Routledge: Chapter 2.
- Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics*, USA: The Greenwood Press, 2007.
- Sergej Mahnovski, Kamil Akramov, and Theodore Karasik, *Economic Dimensions of Security in Central Asia*, USA: Rand, 2007.
- Richard Pomfret, *The Central Asian Economies Since Independence*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Michael Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004.
- Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game*, London: Atlantic Books, 2004.
- Khalid, Adeeb. 2003. A Secular Islam: Nation, State, and Religion in Uzbekistan. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35 (4): 573–98
- Alex Stringer, "Soviet Development in Central Asia: The Classic Colonial Syndrome?" in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, Tom Everett-Heath (ed.) London: Routledge Curzon, 2003.
- Glenn, John. 2003. *Human Security and the Disaffected of Central Asia*. *International Relations*, 17 (4): 453-475.
- Carrothers, Thomas. 2002. *The End of the Transition Paradigm*. *Journal of Democracy*. 13 (1): 5-21.
- Soucek, Svatopluk. 2000. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Chapter 17
- Jones-Luong, Pauline & Weinthal, Erika. 1999. The NGO Paradox: Democratic Goals and Nondemocratic Outcomes in Kazakhstan. *Europe-Asia Studies* 51 (7): 1267-1284.

- Roger D. Kangas, "State-building and Civil Society in Central Asia," in Vladimir Tismeneanu (ed.) *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1995.
- Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1990.
- Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*, Kent: Croom Helm Ltd, 1983.
- Peter Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Arnold J. Toynbee, *Between Oxus and Jumna*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1929.