

Theoretical Analysis of the Place and Role of the South Caucasus in the Interests of the United States of America

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyze the place and role of the South Caucasus in ensuring the interests of the United States using various theories of geopolitics and international relations. The article provides the theoretical foundations of the place and role of the South Caucasus in the interests of the United States, both in the presence and in the absence of a geopolitical struggle between the major powers of the world in different regions. After the Cold War, democracy and the market economy began to expand into the eastern geopolitical space. The strengthening of these values in the South Caucasus may contribute to their spread to other post-Soviet regions, as well as to the Middle East, since the South Caucasus is located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. Approaching the topic in terms of geopolitical competition, as well as the fact that the region shares borders with countries such as Russia, Turkey, and Iran, and is in the interests of an emerging power like China, increases its importance.

Methods. In the study of the topic, general scientific research methods, analysis of documents and works of famous researchers, and comparative analysis were used.

When it comes to the scientific novelty of the article, it can be said that classical and modern international relations and geopolitical theories were used and comparisons were made between the theories for a comprehensive analysis. Utilizing various theories, the article reveals the necessity of the South Caucasus in the interests of the United States both in terms of alternative energy and transport potential between Europe and Asia and one of the main centers of the struggle for primacy in Eurasia.

Conclusions. After the ideological confrontation ended in 1991 with the collapse of the USSR, a number of states of Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia restored their independences. Due to its geographical position and rich natural resources, the South Caucasus is one of the strategically important regions of the world and has historically played a crucial role in the foreign policy of great powers. In the new international relations system, determining the place and role of the South Caucasus in the interests of the great powers, especially in the context of the U.S. interests, indicates the relevance of the topic.

Keywords: The South Caucasus, the USA, realism, geopolitical confrontation, Heartland theory, Rimland theory, international transport corridor

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Теоретичний аналіз місця та ролі Південного Кавказу в інтересах Сполучених Штатів Америки

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Анотація

Мета дослідження – проаналізувати місце і роль Південного Кавказу в забезпеченні інтересів США з використанням різних теорій геополітики та міжнародних відносин. У статті приводяться теоретичні основи місця і ролі Південного Кавказу в інтересах США як при наявності, так і при наявності геополітичної боротьби між крупними державами світу в різних регіонах. Після холодної війни демократія і ринкова економіка почали розширюватися в східному геополітичному просторі. Зміцнення цих цінностей на Південному Кавказі може створювати їх в інших пострадянських регіонах, а також на Близькому Сході, оскільки Південний Кавказ знаходиться на перехресті між Європою та Азією. При підході до теми з точки зору геополітичної конкуренції, має значення той факт, що регіон межує з такими країнами, як Росія, Туреччина та Іран, і відповідає інтересам такої держави як Китай.

Методи. При дослідженні теми були використані загальнонаукові методи дослідження, аналіз документів та праці відомих дослідників, загальний аналіз.

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Що стосується наукової новизни статей, то можна сказати, що були використані класичні та сучасні теорії міжнародних відносин і геополітики, і проведено порівняння між теоріями для комплексного аналізу. У статті з використанням різних теорій розкривається необхідність Південного Кавказу в інтересах США, як з точки зору альтернативного енергетичного та транспортного потенціалу між Європою та Азією, так і одного з основних центрів боротьби за першість в Євразії.

Висновки. Після завершення ідеологічного протистояння в 1991 році з розпадом СРСР ряд держав Східної Європи, Південного Кавказу та Центральної Азії відновили свою незалежність. Завдяки своєму географічному положенню та багатим природним ресурсам Південний Кавказ є одним із стратегічно важливих регіонів світу та історично відіграє важливу роль у зовнішній політиці великих держав. У новій системі міжнародних відносин визначення місць і ролі Південного Кавказу в інтересах великих держав, особливо в контексті інтересів США, свідчить про актуальність теми.

Ключові слова: Південний Кавказ, США, реалізм, геополітичне протистояння, теорія Хартленда, теорія Римленда, міжнародний транспортний коридор

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Analysis of the research and publications.

While analyzing various theories in the process of conducting the research, several scientific methods were used such as comparison, study of documents, induction, as well as systemic and cultural. In order to reveal the theoretical foundations of the place and role of the South Caucasus in the interests of the United States, several publications were utilized: Duqin, A. (2000), Tsygankov, P. A. (2003), Brzezinski, Z. (1997), Joseph, S. Nye. (1990), Cohen, S. B. (2015), Mead, W. R. (2014), Jackson, R., Sørensen, G. (2013), Huntington, S. P. (1993).

The purpose of the research is to identify the specific features of the South Caucasus from military-political and socio-economic points of view for the interests of the United States. Having achieved the goal of the research, it is possible to understand the interests and foreign policy of the United States towards the South Caucasus, as well as, to describe the level of conflict and cooperation, and to study security issues in the South Caucasus.

Main material.

The national interest is the core component of foreign policy in ensuring the national security and increasing the power of the state. American political scientist D. E. Nuechterlein identified four long-term, enduring the U.S. national interests: defense of homeland, economic well-being, favorable world order, and promotion of values. He also combined them into a four-dimensional matrix to determine their levels of intensity. They are survival (critical), vital (dangerous), major (serious), peripheral (bothersome) (Nuechterlein, 2001, p. 20). The place and role of the South Caucasus for the United States can be explored from the national interests of economic well-being, favorable world order and promotion of values. Historically, various regional orders based on military-political and economic factors have developed. The period we are living now is the period of modern international order. The modern international order is based on the creation of the global economy, a global system of states and the global circulation of ideas. The modern international order is mainly dominated by Western ideas and institutions, as well as Western states that are the creators and supporters of capitalist economy.

For example, London and New York, the world's major financial centers play an important role in the global political economy (Lawson, 2017, p. 38). The United States, the leading nation of the West, needs to maintain and develop the modern international order. In this regard, the strategically important regions of the world are particularly substantial. One of these regions is the South Caucasus.

Realism is one of the theories explaining the international relations. According to realists, strong states do what they can and weak states do what the strong allow. Any state of international relations depends on the interaction of a small number of great powers (Tsygankov, 2003, p. 110). For the prominent theorist K. Waltz, the best theory of international relations is a neorealist system theory, which focuses on the structure of the system, the interacting units of the system, and the continuities and change in the system. For neorealist theory, the structure of the system, the distribution of forces in the system is basic and the actors are not important, since the structure of the system forces them to move in a certain direction (Jackson and Sørensen, 2013, p. 79). As the United States is one of the most powerful countries in the world, the power in its hands allows it to expand its power and sphere of influence. In the 1990s, the United States was the only superpower with a very strong military and economic power in the unipolar international system. At that time, unipolarity was put forward by the American scientist Charles Krauthammer (Krauthammer, 1990/1991, p. 23). However, the current multi-polar system is more based on the balance of power between the great powers. Therefore, they are fighting for strategically important regions of the world.

Referring to various geopolitical theories, it can be demonstrated that the South Caucasus with its favorable geographical position is important for the U.S. interests. The English scientist, geographer and a political consultant H. Mackinder's "Heartland" theory is one of the most famous theories explaining the significance of the region. In 1904, in his article of "The Geographical Pivot of History", Mackinder distinguished the "pivot area" in world politics which is inaccessible by sea

powers. This area included mainly the Siberian forests in the north and its steppes of the south, bounded by the deserts and subarid steppes of Turkestan (Cohen, 2015, p. 17). Outside the pivot area, Germany, Austria, Turkey, India and China are in a great inner crescent, and Britain, South Africa, Australia, the United States, Canada and Japan are in an outer crescent (Mackinder, 2004, p. 313). At that time "pivot area" was almost part of the Russian Empire.

In the work of "Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction" (1919), Mackinder used the term of "heartland" and expanded his previous map by adding Eastern Europe from the Baltic Sea through the Black Sea as a key to the Heartland. As a result, he created this thesis: "Who rules Eastern Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands World-Island: Who rules World-Island commands the world" (Cohen, 2015, p. 19). Heartland is located in the middle of the so-called World-Island, consisting of Europe, Asia and Africa (Duquin, 2000, p. 25). Heartland is significant because these three continents are rich in people and natural resources, and it has natural borders that prevent it being captured by sea powers. To rule the heart of the world is the foundation of world hegemony. Although the Heartland theory was put forward at the beginning of the XX century, it is still relevant today. If we apply Mackinder's views from the contemporary perspective, the U.S. foreign policy after the Cold War is based on Mackinder's core ideas. During the Cold War, the South Caucasus was one part of the USSR. The USSR collapsed and independent states emerged. The Caspian Sea region as one part of the Heartland is independent now, and the United States is trying to expand its reputation and protect the region from Russian influence.

Another concept for establishing and maintaining the U.S. supremacy in the world is the Rimland theory, which is different from the Heartland theory, but develops it. American professor of international relations Nicholas Spykman created the Rimland theory and proposed following thesis: "who controls Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world" (Plashinskiy, 2018, p. 161). The coastal areas of Eurasia including maritime Europe, the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, and China were the keys to world control (Cohen, 2015, p. 26). Rimland is a geostrategic zone that permits control the world's major shipping lanes and surrounds the Heartland. The South Caucasus doesn't include the Rimland, but borders the Middle East, as well as, situated between Russia and the Middle East. The regional powers in the Middle East are also Iran and Turkey which are neighbors of the South Caucasus. These factors reinforce the importance of the South Caucasus in the U.S. foreign policy. In the strategic regions of the world, the United States employs various tools in cooperation with states. One of these means is international organizations which are one of the features of modern international order. NATO, an intergovernmental organization is one of the instruments of the U.S. foreign policy. The countries of maritime Europe have been members of NATO since the Cold War.

For the American diplomat George Kennan, the architect of the "great new strategy" of the United States, lasted about 50 years, the U.S. should follow the policy of "long-term, patient, but firm and careful containment" (Turan, & Keskin, 2017, p. 710). The aim of the containment policy was to prevent the expansionist policy of the Soviet Union with surrounding it. For example, The Baghdad Pact (CENTO) in the Middle East, SEATO organization in the Asia-Pacific region and NATO in Western Europe were fundamental instruments in the fight against communist expansion. In the context of post-Cold war geopolitical rivalry between the U.S. and Russia, the South Caucasus along with Eastern Europe and Central Asia are containment territories to surround Russia. As a result of NATO's enlargement to the East, several Eastern European countries are members of it. Georgia and Ukraine are seeking to join NATO, too.

With the end of the Cold War, certain changes took place in the concept of power. Now, power means not only military and economic power, but also soft power. According to Joseph S. Nye, co-optive or soft power is when one country gets other countries to want what it wants. Cultural attraction, ideology and international institutions are soft power resources (Nye, 1990, p. 166-167). At that time and now also, the United States is not only economically and militarily the most powerful state in the world, but also culturally attractive and technologically superior. In the new geopolitical rivalry, the spread of western values and transition to the market economy are the elements of the soft power.

In concordance with constructivist theories of international relations an important aspect of international relations is social. Because the international system is a set of ideas, a set of thoughts, when these opinions and ideas about the existence of international relations change, then the system itself will change (Jackson, & Sørensen, 2013, p. 209). Outstanding constructivist A. Wendt theorizes three cultures of anarchy. One of them is a Kantian culture of anarchy. In Kantian culture of anarchy states treat each other as a friend. States are neither enemies nor rivals. They are friends with each other and resolve disputes peacefully and act collectively for each other's safety (Jackson, & Sørensen, 2013, p. 216). Liberal democracies are an example of Kant's culture of anarchy. Another example is the democratic peace theory, which emerged from Kant's idealism and asserted that developed democratic states do not fight each other (Lebedeva, 2007, p. 177). One of the concepts which claims that there is no alternative to liberal democracy and a market economy, and the civilized future of mankind is related on these values, is the essay of "End of history?" by F. Fukuyama, a well-known proponent of liberalism. For Fukuyama the end of history is: "that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 4).

However, there are researches who do not agree that the end of the Cold war is the end of history. American academic, professor in international relations, Walter Russell Mead in his article of "The Return of

Geopolitics" emphasizes that China, Russia and Iran are not reconciled with the political settlement of the Cold War. The ideological victory of liberal capitalist democracy over communism did not eliminate the use of hard power. These three states which he called them revisionist powers are not accustomed to the post-Cold War geopolitical settlement and are trying to change it (Mead, 2014). In the new geopolitical rivalry, conflicts and wars is inevitable in the strategic regions of the world, especially in the post-Soviet space. And in some cases, there is probability that the U.S., it, may join the conflicts. Or the United States may to cooperate militarily and economically with the countries in the strategic regions of the world, regardless of whether they are democratic or not. The United States has allies in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Asia-Pacific region. The United States is expanding its allies in Europe through NATO and in other regions on a bilateral basis with individual states.

After World War II, the Anglo-American school of geopolitics introduced theory of "mondialism." The concept of "mondialism" arose long before the victory of the West in the Cold War. The meaning of mondialism comes down to postulating the inevitability of a complete planetary integration, transition from the plurality of states, peoples, nations and cultures to uniform world in One World (Duqin, 2000, p. 71). A number of geopolitical conceptions have been put forward about this theory. One of such authors is Z. Brzezinski. Azerbaijan's important role is reflected in Z. Brzezinski's work of "The Great Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives". Azerbaijan is one of the geopolitical pivots on Eurasia's new political map (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 41). Azerbaijan with its vast energy resources plays a significant role in the issue of alternative energy corridor between the West and the East, as well as for Central Asia's energy resources (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 46, 47).

Georgia is another strategic country in the South Caucasus. Strategically, Georgia is a crucial country connecting the Caspian Sea and Azerbaijan with the West (Cornell, 2007, p. 4). Georgia's and Azerbaijan's strategic importance for the United States are their supports for the fight against terrorism, ensuring the stability of the most vital energy transportation route from the Caspian Basin to the Mediterranean Sea, European markets.

In 2017, the Caspian basin accounted for 3.4% of total world oil supply and 5.9% of world natural gas supply (Aydin, & Azhgaliyeva, 2019, p. 4). It is important for Europe's energy security, but the traditional route of energy supply to the West goes through Russia. The South Caucasus has an advantageous geopolitical position in terms of alternative routes. For example, BTC, BTE and the Southern Gas Corridor are important energy pipelines in Europe's energy security. That is why the South Caucasus plays an important role in ensuring the economic interests of the U.S. Oil and gas reserves also play an important role in the economy of the Caspian region.

In the U.S. National Security Strategy for A New Century 1997, was mentioned: "the Caspian Basin, with

potential oil reserves of 200 billion barrels, also promises to play an increasingly important role in meeting rising world energy demand in coming decades" (A National Security Strategy, 1997, p.18). Despite the fact that Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are rich energy countries, they are more dependent on Russia for the transit of energy resources. In this regard, the role of South Caucasus in the transportation of energy from these countries is important for the United States.

After the collapse of the USSR, the construction of new, alternative transport and communication routes between Asia and Europe through Central Asia, the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe and the restoration of the ancient Silk Road began to be discussed. TRACECA is one of such programs was initiated in 1993 by EU and aimed at to restore the Silk Road (Shahmuradov, 2011, p. 123). The New Silk Road Initiative is an alternative transport and communication corridor to the traditional routes. For example, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, launched in 2017, is suitable for the U.S. strategic interests in the transit of goods from Asia to Europe.

If the East-West international transport corridor is supported more by the USA and its western allies, but the North-South international transport corridor is offered by Russia and Iran (Shahmuradov, 2011, p. 124). The South Caucasus participates in both projects. Along with the United States, the European Union and Russia, also China has its own plan for a transport and communication corridor between Europe and Asia. "One Belt, One road" project has been proposed by China. The project is connecting Asia, Africa and Europe. The project covers 71 countries and half of the world's population. This project is expected to cost more than \$1tn (Lily, & Niko, 2018). The Caspian region is significant not only for the interests of the United States and Russia, but also for EU and China.

The South Caucasus is also crucial for the interests of the United States from the cultural aspect. Caucasus is a special geographic space between East and West and is part of both Asia and Europe. The movement of people of eastern and western civilizations between Asia and Europe through the Caucasus has a great impact on the culture, a way of life of the region (Metreveli, 2009, p. 7-8). According to the American political scientist S. Huntington's article of "The clash of civilizations?", the most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating seven or eight major civilizations, including Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilizations (Huntington, 1993, p. 25). The cultural diversity of the South Caucasus, the Islamic and Turkish factors allow it to establish close ties with the Middle East and Central Asia. The strengthening of Western values in the South Caucasus can help their spread to neighboring regions and prevent cultural conflicts.

Conclusions.

With the help of a number of theories, the place and role of the South Caucasus was studied, and it was concluded that the region has geopolitical, economic

and cultural significance in the implementation of the interests of the United States. The theories reveal the importance of the region in terms of geographical features and natural resources. Due to its location between two seas bordering Georgia on the Black Sea and Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea, the region is important as an energy, transport and communication corridor between the West and the East. The South Caucasus is also significant for the United States in the spread of Western values, democracy and a market economy in the era of globalization. Attempts to change the unipolar international system which is under the leadership of

the United States also increase the importance of the South Caucasus. So, the South Caucasus is one of the main centers of the struggle for primacy in Eurasia. The analysis of various theories leads to the conclusion the region has an important place in maintaining and strengthening the U.S. victory and leadership after the end of the Cold War and in neutralizing its rivals in Eurasia. In conclusion, I would like to mention that the South Caucasus is crucial for the U.S. at most in maintaining its status as a superpower and at least keeping the balance of power with Russia and China in Eurasia.

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