

Iran in Central Asia: 1990-2000

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ABSTRACT

Central Asia was regarded as a kind of battle ground among regional and global powers after the demise of the Soviet Union. The reasons of the struggle in becoming active and dominant in Central Asia were various. Different states had different motives. Economic, political, strategic, energy driven motives were embedded with each other. In this context, Iran has tried to form various types of engagements with the newly established independent states in Central Asia in which she is dominant and active. In this respect the period between 1990 and 2000 is of crucial importance in determining the initiation and the continuation of the relevant relations. Iranian ambitions toward this region were challenged by Turkish policies. Central Asia has become kind of a chess board between two regional powers; Turkey and Iran who were supported by different actors outside the region. It is vitally important to understand and diagnose this time period under study in order to formulate and implement accurate policies in this region today.

Key Words: *Iran, Turkey, Central Asia, Russia*

Orta Asya'da İran: 1990-2000

ÖZET

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından sonra Orta Asya bölgesel ve küresel güçler arasında bir çeşit üstünlük sağlama alanına dönüşmüştür. Orta Asya üzerinde etkili ve baskın olma mücadelesinin nedenleri çeşitlilik arz etmekteydi. Farklı devletlerin farklı dürtüleri vardı. Ekonomik, siyasi, stratejik ve enerji eksenli dürtüler iç içe geçmişti. Bu bağlamda, İran Orta Asya'da özgürlüğünü henüz kazanmış, yeni kurulan ülkeler ile endisinin baskın ve aktif olduğu çok çeşitli ilişkiler geliştirmeye çalışmıştır. 1990 ve 2000 yılları arasındaki dönem, bu yönden, ilgili ilişkilerin başlanması ve devamı açısından kritik bir öneme sahiptir. İran'ın bu bölge ile ilgili heyecanları Türk politikaları tarafından bir meydan okuma ile karşılaşmıştır. Orta Asya, dışarıdaki farklı aktörler tarafından desteklenen bölgesel iki güç olan Türkiye ve İran arasında bir çeşit satranç tahtası halini almıştır. Bu bölgede günümüzde uygun politikalar üretip uygulayabilmek için inceleme altına alınan ilgili zaman dilimini anlamak ve teşhis etmek hayati bir öneme sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *İran, Türkiye, Orta Asya, Rusya*

Introduction

Sir Halfrod Mackinder called the Eurasian steppe as the "heartland of the world" and argued that he who controls these territories will have the say in world politics. The notion that the control of Central Asia seems to be the key to the dominance of Eurasian landmass has influenced even determined the behaviour of nations.

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Central Asia has undergone cultural and political transformation as a result of the interaction between the Russians and various Turkic ethnic groups, which were originated. The power struggle over this landmass appeared out to be a Great Game among the actors.

It has been regarded as the Great Game, chapter two¹ that Central Asia might have appeared out to become a new geopolitical battleground. The collapse of the Soviet Union has inspired a new contest for Central Asia. For most of the 19th century, this remote territory was the chessboard across which Russia steadily pushed its empire southward –as a check on the British, who were probing northward from their Indian stronghold. The game shifted in the 1920s, when the Bolsheviks carved out a couple of artificial republics from where had once been Turkistan. After that the West tried to bloc the spread of communism further south, on effort which led to US support for the Afghan rebels.

The actors and the aims have been transformed. With respect to the strategic vision worthy of critical examination about Central Asia, the region may be regarded as a vast borderland between Russia and the Middle East.

The end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union profoundly effected the international configuration of power. The bipolar era that dominated the international system from 1945 to 1991 is now history. With its disappearance every government of the globe must rethink the basic foreign policy assumptions and approaches to national security. In my view it seems to be apparent that the local leaderships should look to their security and developmental needs without the luxury of a reliable protector as a supplier of arms and a hedge against defeat at the hands of a regional rival.

The newly established independent states of Central Asia both affects and is being affected by the policies of great powers as well as regional powers.² Two of the regional powers, Iran and Turkey, have their unique and distinctive views and approaches from political to security dimensions.

The coming chapters will try to analyse the Iranian perspective and approach to Central Asia between 1990 and 2000. In this respect the picture of Central Asia after the demise of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Turkic Republics will provide tools of a broader analysis. Stipulating the differences in the Iranian perception of Central Asia concerning the different states would provide necessary tools of a coherent analysis. In addition to these, the main lines of the Iranian and Turkish competition over Central Asia will also have a say in helping to give a clearer vision of the topic under discussion.

I. Central Asia After The Demise Of Soviet Union

The demise of Soviet Union and the emergence of newly independent states (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan) along the Southern border of her successor –Russia- placed a distance between the historical

¹ Post, T. (2/3/1992), “The Great Game Chapter Two”, *Newsweek*, P. 28

² Fuller, Graham. (1990), “The Emergence Of Central Asia”, *Foreign Policy*, Issue 78, P. 51

rivals;³ Turkey and Iran at one hand, Soviet –Russian Empire at the other. The emergence of new areas among these countries brought new relations, new areas of competition and cooperation into agenda the histories of which used to be in continuous conflict. The demise of SU created a big buffer zone in both Transcausia and Central Asia in which there is Russia in one hand and Turkey and Iran in the other.⁴ With the demise of the Soviet Union, this region is no longer regarded under the influence of a single hegemony, but it was inevitable for the region to fall into the interest areas of the effective regional powers⁵ as well as global forces out of the region.

The dominant, before the demise, Soviet Russia became only one of the actors in the new power configuration. These newly emerged states were regarded as a source of competition for influence⁶ and economic struggle among the players. The notion that the “great game”⁷ –when nineteenth century imperial statesman engaged one another in geopolitical chess across the board of Central Asia- has been regarded in the late twentieth century with a new set of players. The great game model might be regarded as falling into a reduced respect. It might be perceived as; a vacuum has been created in the former Soviet South after the collapse of SU, this vacuum is to be filled with external influence and that different states would try to take the advantage of this situation by trying to impose their own models to the region to enhance, in a way, their global power and prestige.⁸

Three important countries of the region Russia, Turkey and Iran have been affected differently from the newly occurred structure. Russia fell in a position to share a degree of her political and economic control which it had during the Cold War years with others. Turkey emerged as the most advantageous country in the new atmosphere, found a new opportunity to establish relations with friendly and relative communities which she has been apart for centuries. Although her accomplishment in achieving this is debatable, there is no doubt that Turkey owns a social, political and economic power in the region. Iran perceived these countries as an invaluable opportunity to end her isolation in the international arena.⁹ At the same time Iran fell in a position to develop new strategies opposing to Turkey which reached a highly influencing position in the region, and as a natural outcome of this worries cooperated with Russia. West, especially USA, accepted Turkey as a means of relation in their relations with the region.¹⁰ Iran in response intensified her cooperation with Russia.

³ Criss, Nur Bilge And Güner Serdar, (1999), “Geopolitical Configurations The Russia-Turkey-Iran Triangle”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol.30, No.3, P. 268

⁴ Roy, Oliver. (2000), *Yeni Orta Asya Ya Da Ulusların İmal Edilişi*, İstanbul: Metis Yay, P. 258

⁵ Malik, Hafeez. (1994), “Central Asias’ Geopolitical Significance And Problems Of Independence: An Introduction”, (Ed.) Malik, Hafeez. *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance And Future Prospects*, New York: St.Martin’s Press, P. 7

⁶ Rubinstein, Alvin. (1994), “The Geopolitical Full On Russia”, *Orbis*, Vol.38, No.4, P. 569

⁷ *Economist*, (1/30/1993) “Great Games”, P. 38

⁸ Rashid, Ahmed. (1995), *The Resurgence Of Central Asia*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, P. 214

⁹ Afrasiabi, K.L. (1994), *After Khomeini New Directions In Iran’s Foreign Policy*, Boulder: Westview Press, P. 119

¹⁰ Olcott, Martha Brill. (1992), “Central Asia’s Catapult To Independence”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.71, No.3, P. 112

Searching for new identities, roles and models of cooperation seems to continue also in the future as new dimensions are being added to the game and balance by the actors.¹¹

II. Iranian Policy Dimensions In Central Asia

The dissolution of the Soviet Empire and the emergence of new states resulted in big and complex structural changes in the geopolitics of the region. These changes heavily affected the security politics of the neighbouring countries, their regional affairs and their relations both with Russia and with the new independent states. Iran is trying to search a new role for herself in this new context in accordance with her new geopolitics and economic position.¹²

Iranian activities in these relations are being influenced by the activities and policies of other states. Especially United States and other western countries, Russia and Turkey, regional countries such as Pakistan, Israel and Arab states and their bilateral relations with Iran are the areas, which are under the influence of this affair.¹³ These factors block and constrain Iranian ambitions in achieving her aims by this way. Moreover these factors are going to be under a continuous influence as Iranian relations develop with Central Asian states.¹⁴

Although there seems to be a decrease in the degree of close relations between Russia and Iran after the collapse of the Soviet mentality and the new approach of the West towards Russia, the common standing point of Iran and Russia pushes them to act together in the regional affairs. One of the important reasons what pushes Russia to be in accordance with Iran is the western –especially American- willingness to act with Turkey in this region. Turkey has a deep national tie apart from historical and cultural ties regarding to the region.¹⁵

Iran was seen as a fundamentalist threat after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The possibility that Iran may fill the empty sphere by the means of power and influence emerged after the demise of Soviet Union was perceived as a big question by the USA and the Western World.¹⁶ Iran has a great advantage in the new map of the region. This perception is being regarded as a determining factor supporting Iranian ambitions. The primary advantage of Iran is the easiness of entering to the region. Iran, by her geopolitical dominance, provides a sense of bridge for their transfer to the world.

¹¹ Lipousky, Igor. (1996), "Central Asia: In Search Of A New Political Identity", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.50, No.2, P. 216

¹² Aras, Bülent. (1996), "Iran'ın Değişen Güvenlik Dengesi Çerçevesinde Orta Asya Ve Kafkasya Cumhuriyetleriyle İlişkileri", *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol.3, No.3, P. 169

¹³ Piacentini, Valeria. (1994). "İslam Iranian And Saudi Arabian Religious And Geopolitical Competition In Central Asia", (Ed.), Ehteshami, Anoushirvan., *From Gulf To Central Asia*, Exeter: University Of Exeter Press, P. 29

¹⁴ Pipes, Daniel. (199/1994), "Ambitious Iran, Troubled Neighbours", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.72, No.1, P. 129

¹⁵ Dikkaya, Mehmet. (1999), "Orta Asya'da Yeni Büyük Oyun: Türkiye, Rusya Ve İran", *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol.5, No.3, P. 191

¹⁶ Bulliet, Richard. (1999), "Twenty Years Of Islamic Politics", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.53, No.2, P. 193

The demise of the Soviet Union heavily affected the Iranian security. As a result of this Iran faced a need of making changes in her security and strategic balances.¹⁷ At the end it seemed inevitable to search for a multi dimensional policy character.

One of the reasons of the Iranian interest to the region is the search for European relations to avoid the negative effects of the isolationist policy pursued by USA. The “Dual Containment Policy” of USA, which is being pursued since the Gulf War started to be questioned seriously. Some policy makers of US want a nuanced policy towards Iran.¹⁸

Iran has a deep transformation in her relations with the new republics. Initially she regarded the area to serve an ideological model, but now she has efforts to find a better place in the balance by increasing her economic influence in becoming the dominant actor of the region. By the emergence of new influence areas, producing new strategies came into agenda. Although it was thought that the model proposed by Iran would have political Islam in its essence as opposed to the secular-democratic model of Turkey and Israel, time has showed that this is not the case. Iran has a careful approach to Central Asian states in events concerning religious affairs.¹⁹ She takes the considerable advantages of secular states like Turkey and Egypt, the new Islamist countries such as Pakistan and Malasia and the sunni dominant Saudi Arabia into consideration. Moreover Iran is well aware of the fact that Turkic republics are favouring a gradual type of change rather than a radical type and that they are determined to enter a model of western type economies.²⁰

A) Uzbekistan

Uzbek and Iran relations are more on economic terms. Iranian governance is aware of the uneasiness of the Uzbek government in the efforts of Tehran in exporting the radical Islam.²¹ The Uzbek President continuously declares that they are in favour of “Turkish Model” development in socio-economic and political development strategies.

But the Turkish tendency of Uzbeks did not prevent them to make both bilateral and multilateral economic agreements with Iran. This situation is valid for other Turkic Central Asian Republics also; and they also try to value the opportunities of cooperation in accordance with their interests. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Caspian Cooperation Organization are the two pillars of Kerimovs’ strategy in gaining commercial and technical assistance in economic terms

¹⁷ Ehteshami, A. (1997), “Iran And Central Asia: Responding To Regional Change”, (Ed.), Mozaffari, Mehdi., *Security Policies In The Commonwealth Of Independent States*, London: Mcmillan Press, P. 94

¹⁸ Brzezinsky, Zbigniew., Scowcroft, Brent And Murphy, Richard. (1997), “Differentiated Containment”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.76, No.3, P. 22

¹⁹ Çolak, Ihsan. (1999), “Değişen Stratejiler Işığında İran-Türk Cumhuriyetleri İlişkilerinde Yeni Gelişmeler” *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol.5, No.3, P. 211

²⁰ Howell, Nathaniel. (1996), “Iran’s Policy In Northwest Asia: Opportunities, Challenges And Implication”, (Ed.), Al-Suwadi, *Iran And The Gulf: A Search For Stability*, Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Centre For Strategic Studies And Research, P. 179

²¹ Afrasiabi, K.L. (1994), *After Khomeini New Directions In Irans’ Foreign Policy*, Boulder: Westview Press, P. 139

under the Iranian Cooperation umbrella.²² An agreement was reached between Iran and Uzbekistan on economic, industrial, Scientific and technological cooperation in November 1992. Iran did not foreground cultural and historical proximity very often, tried to stand far away from Uzbek and Tajik dispute over Bukhara and Samarkand.²³

Comparatively, in spite of its pivotal position among the Central Asian Republics, Uzbekistan has not been as attractive to Iran as the other republics. Some of the reasons might be regarded, as Uzbekistan is neither a neighbour nor a Persian speaking republic.²⁴ In spite of these it seems to be that although Uzbekistan is more in favour of developing relations with Turkey and Russia, she is in a direction of developing relations with Iran gradually.

B) Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan's relations with Iran seem to be the least developed among the Central Asian Republics, probably because of its remoteness from Iran. The geopolitical dominance of Iran did not serve an important advantage for her. Iranian influence was hampered much by Turkish effect and the Israeli tended policies of Kyrgyz policy makers. The fact that Kyrgyzstan do not have a border in the Caspian Sea lacks Tehran to pursue a policy over Kyrgyzstan that she provides the door or bridge for her entrance to the world. This geographic disadvantage does not offer strategic opportunities for Iran.²⁵

However, Iran was among the few nations that opened an embassy in Bishkek. Bishkek was in favor of developing relations with Israel and tended to pursue policies that were in accordance with Russia.²⁶ This opened a way for Iran and Kyrgyz relations to be in a cool atmosphere.

C) Turkmenistan

Iran's relations with Turkmenistan has been the best of all those with the post-Soviet republics, due to the absence of any major security problems and the relative political stability of Turkmenistan.²⁷ It seems that, because of geopolitics reasons, Turkmenistan wants to cooperate with Iran in exporting her natural gas resources to foreign markets.

Iran is an economic partner, technical specialist and the gate to world for Turkmenistan. The economic factors determining Turkoman and Iranian relations rely on bilateral economic gains. In this respect the regime exportation, which is not valid

²² Çolak, Ihsan. (1999), "Değişen Stratejiler Işığında İran-Türk Cumhuriyetleri İlişkilerinde Yeni Gelişmeler" *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol.5, No.3, P. 216

²³ Sajjadpour, Seyed Kazem. (1994), "Iran, The Caucasus And Central Asia", (Ed.), Banvazizi, Ali And Weiner, Myron., *New Geopolitics Of Central Asia And Its Borderlands*, London: Ib Tauris Co, P. 211

²⁴ Hunter, Shireen. (1996), *Central Asia Since Independence*, Washington: The Center For Strategic And International Studies, P. 134

²⁵ Çolak, Ihsan. (1999), "Değişen Stratejiler Işığında İran-Türk Cumhuriyetleri İlişkilerinde Yeni Gelişmeler" *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol.5, No.3, P. 219

²⁶ Saivetz, Carol. (1994), "Central Asia: Emerging Relations With The Arab States And Israel", (Ed.), Malik, Hafeez., *Central Asia Its Strategic Importance And Future Prospects*, New York: St.Martin's Press, New York, P. 317

²⁷ Herzog, Edmund. (1995), *Iran And The Former Soviet South*, London: The Royal Institute Of International Affairs, P. 23

and the case for Turkmenistan, is not regarded as a challenge to deteriorate the relations.

At the cultural level, Iran seems not to be very active in Turkmenistan.²⁸ Given the pragmatic approach of both Iran and Turkmenistan, relations between the two may be expected to expand even further.

D) Kazakhstan

The fact that Kazakhstan possesses nuclear weapons foregrounds this state in the region and makes her an important element of the security balance in the region.

In spite of Nazarbayevs' suspicious view of the regime question, Iranian firms are active in Kazakhstan. A couple of agreements are being signed between Kazakhstan and Iran over the Construction of the harbour and oil pipelines.²⁹ Both countries attended to an international forum on the Caspian Sea and both countries signed the agreement concerning the collective use of the Caspian Sea.

Iran seems to be aware of the fact that it is not easy to establish a tie with Kazakhstan by itself. Because of this reason, she foregrounds the regional cooperation organizations such as ECO in achieving this aim.³⁰ Iran believes that cooperation especially with Turkey would help in developing relations with Kazakhstan and Iran.

In addition to these efforts of cooperation in economic terms –a memorandum of understanding on economic cooperation was signed between the Kazakh labour Minister and his Iranian counterpart in February 1993 –in the cultural arena, Kazakhstan's minister of culture signed a letter of understanding for the expansion of cultural ties with his Iranian counterpart on 12 April 1992 in Tehran.³¹

The cultural and political relations seem to be developing as the economic cooperation improves between these countries.

E) Tajikistan

The unquestionable truth that Tajikistan is the only Persian speaking republic in Central Asia may help to explain not only Tehrans' approach to Tajikistan, but to that of Iranians in general, living outside their country. It is essential immediately to mention that although Tajikistan forms a similarity to Iran in linguistic terms, it does not overlap with Iran in religious terms since Tajikistan Muslim are Sunni³² whereas there is the Shia sect in Iran.

That the Persian culture has deep roots in Tajikistan is a fact which should not be forgotten; and Tajiks approach this as a source and part of their identity. Nevertheless, due to the domestic political circumstances of Tajikistan, any cultural

²⁸ Sajjadpour, Seyed Kazem. (1994), "Iran, The Caucasus And Central Asia", (Ed.), Banvazizi, Ali And Weiner, Myron., *New Geopolitics Of Central Asia And Its Borderlands*, London: Ib Tauris Co, P. 209

²⁹ *Economist*, (5.4.1996), "Pipe Dreams In Central Asia", P. 37

³⁰ Hooglund, Eric. (1994), "Iran And Central Asia", (Ed.), Ehteshami, Anoushiravan., *From Gulf To Central Asia*, Exeter: University Of Exeter Press, P. 118

³¹ Sajjadpour, Seyed Kazem. (1994), "Iran, The Caucasus And Central Asia", (Ed.), Banvazizi, Ali And Weiner, Myron., *New Geopolitics Of Central Asia And Its Borderlands*, London: Ib Tauris Co, P. 212

³² Atkin, Muriel. (1989), "The Survival Of Islam In Soviet Tajikistan", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.43, No.4, P. 608

initiative on the part of Iran tends to be interpreted politically.³³ A great amount of the agreements signed between Tajikistan and Iran are of a cultural nature.

Concerning the political relations, besides establishing an embassy in Dushanbe, some other diplomatic missions have taken place including the presidential summit visits. In the economic field, they signed various agreements, moreover agreed on establishing a joint company "Tajiran. In addition to these, there is the Iranian presence in Tajik investment sphere. The civil war and the unrest in Tajikistan in late 1992 did not prevent the improvement of the relations as between these countries. It should not be hard to interpret that the Iranian policy concerning the Persian speaking societies (including a part of Afganistan) helps and will going to help in the betterment of Tajik and Iranian relations.

III. Iranian And Turkish Competition In Central Asia

In the new context which appeared after the demise of Soviet Union, Iran and Turkey offered themselves as main benefitable models for the socioeconomic and political development in the newly independent Muslim Republics. Two alternatives lied in front of the decision-makers of the Turkic Republics whether to choose the secular type or the fundamental theological type. However, it should be borne in mind that the main aim of the new nationstates of Central Asia is to protect their territorial integrity and political unity as well as their independence.

The main lines of foreign policy of these states in trying to achieve this goal are to form relations by using new cultural, strategic and economic means under any circumstances. These newly independent states should at one hand try to diminish the Russian influence, and are being forced to establish multidimensional relations with Russia at the other.³⁴ Another fact to be regarded is that they are isolated from the big water routes of the world. These states and Azerbaijan are confined in a landmass infact. They depend on their neighbours (Russia, China, Iran and to a degree Afganistan and Pakistan) to reach the seas.

The dependency of Central Asian states to other states and their containment is the main reason of annexation of Russia and China. Because of this fact, one of the main aims of Central Asian states in forming and shaping their foreign policy is to overcome this containment and establishing bilateral economic relations based on interest with the developing and developed parts of the world.

It seems to me that it was the geographical inability of Turkey to offer a port and access to the sea-which Iran offers. Her geographic location allows Iran to become an economic rival to Turkey and also forced Central Asian leaders to rethink their balance of behaviours at the same time.

But the isolation is not that simple. It is multi sided and multi dimensional. Both Iran and Turkey saw the dissolvment of Soviet Empire as "the end of a nightmare".³⁵ With this, Turkey's international standing and position in 1991 was very

³³ Rumer, Boris. (1993), "The Gathering Storm In Central Asia", *Orbis*, Vol.37, No.1, P. 94

³⁴ Karpat, Kemal. (1997), "Orta Asya Devletleri Türkiye Ve İran'ın Dış Politikaları", *Yeni Türkiye*, Vol.16, No.3, P. 2167

³⁵ Vassiliev, Alexei. (1994), "Turkey And Iran In Transcaucasia And Central Asia", (Ed.), Ehteshami, Anoushirovan., *From Gulf To Central Asia*, Exeter: University Of Exeter, P. 134

different and far from her position in two hundred years before. Now Turkey is a member of many international institutions as well as NATO and is a strategic ally of the United States. Iran, on the other hand is being isolated from the West. By this way Turkey had an ideological advantage over Iran in 1991. This advantage was being supported by her common religious (Sunni), linguistic, cultural and historical background with Central Asian Republics. On the other hand Iran shared a long border with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan and had or –would have- financial resources when needed.³⁶

According to Iranian claims, Central Asia is Persian and Muslim by cultural roots and should return back to its initial heritage. But this claim was welcomed neither in Persian speaking (but Sunni) Tajikistan, nor Shia (but Turkish speaking Azerbaijan).

In addition to these, Turkey's position is being strengthened by her strong democracy which was able to survive inspite of military interventions. Central Asian Republics regarded Turkey as a successful modern nation state.

In comparison with Turkey, Iran appears to have some advantages while Turkey at the same time has advantages depending on the perception of the way of look. Iran's mutually profitable relations with imperial Russia and later with the USSR, financial capabilities and geographical proximity and location serve for her benefit.³⁷

It seems to be clear that like Turkey, Iran will remain a player, but cannot unilaterally or fundamentally assist Central Asia or change the balanced status quo. Central Asian leaders will vary their policies –which card to play- according to the differences in their interests.

Conclusion

It seems that there are different strategic opportunities for Central Asian states in their integration to the world. They can find a way to open to Europe by establishing strong and friendly relations with Turkey. They can find a way to open to Persian Gulf and to the Gulf of Oman by establishing good neighbourly relations with Iran. They might also find an opportunity to penetrate into East by China.

The strengths in a way, the weakness of these options lies in themselves. No one of them seems to be more desirable and benefitable than the others since each of them appears to have different and unique benefits and costs.

It should be borne in mind that each country is trying to have influence in the region based on the motives and considerations of their own. Whether economic activities and concerns of Iran is a vehicle to export her ideology or an aim itself seems not to be very clear at least for now in the minds of the policymakers of the Central Asian republics.

It should not be forgotten that be it Shah or Khomeini, be a democratic governance or communism Iran would direct and lead her foreign policy in accordance with her practical outcomes not necessarily in regards of her ideology.

³⁶ Smolonsky, Oles. (1994), "Turkish And Iranian Policies In Central Asia", (Ed.), Malik, Hafeez., *Central Asia Its Strategic Importance And Future Prospects*, New York: St.Martins' Press, P. 284

³⁷ Zviagelskaya, Irina. (1994), "Central Asia And Transcaucasia: New Geopolitics", (Ed.), Naumkin, Vitaly., *Central Asia And Transcaucasia Ethnicity And Conflict*, Westport: Greenwood Press, P. 144

With regards to her position in the region Iran should pursue a policy not to be siding with any party which is being regarded as a direct threat in the region. She should defend her interests in economic, political and diplomatic means. The fact that Iranian policymakers do not use Islamic revisionism identities in their relations with the Turkic Republics might be interpreted as the signs of this approach.

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