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Cooperation of I. R. of Iran, Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the North-south transition and its impact on regional security

Elaheh Koolaee

University of Tehran (Tehran, Iran)

Abed Norouzi

University of Tehran (Tehran, Iran)

Abstract. The great economic plans of the Central Eurasian region are rooted in the great games of gaining power and obtaining a special and stable position in international system. The North-South Corridor is an economic project designed to facilitate transportation and increase global trade. The question of the authors is that what effect does the cooperation of Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation have on the security of the region? Their main hypothesis is that the cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation in the North-South international transit route by facilitating transportation will improve the level of relations between all countries along its route reducing regional threats and increasing I. R. of Iran's economic interests in the region.

Keywords: North-South Corridor, I. R. of Iran, Republic of Azerbaijan, Russia, Trade, Transportation, Regional Security

About the authors:

Elaheh Koolaee, Professor of Regional Studies, ORCID: 0000-0001-9655-0995, Director of Center for Central Eurasia Studies, address: Faculty of Law and Political Science.

Abed Norouzi, PhD, Regional Studies, University of Tehran, Enghelab Ave. Tehran, Iran. ekolaee@ut.ac.ir

Introduction

Prior to the current effort to establish a north-south international corridor, this route existed in a different way during the Soviet era. The Nagorno-Karabakh war in the last decades of the twentieth century changed the geo-economy of the South Caucasus and weakened I. R. of I. R. of Iran's infrastructural ties with the South Caucasus republics and Russia. Changes in the international system such as accelerating the process of globalization, increasing global trade, the end of the cold war and the decline of economic cooperation between the powers of global capitalism and foreign direct investment by multinational corporations made the field of study of international political economy important. From

this point of view, political phenomena have economic roots and economic developments arise from the role of national governments as the main actors in the international system. Given the factors threatening I. R. of Iran's national security in the South Caucasus the question arises that what effect does the cooperation of I. R. of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation on the north-south corridor have on the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran? According to the authors, cooperation between the I. R. of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation in the western part of the North-South International Corridor to facilitate transportation will improve I. R. of Iran's relations with the South Caucasus and Russia, reduce regional threats and increase the interests of all countries. Extensive rivalries between economic and political powers in the former Soviet Union and the atmosphere in the relations between these countries and I. R. of Iran caused the authors used a realistic approach to explain cooperation between I. R. of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the north-south corridor and regional security.

Materials and methods

Recent developments in Central Eurasia and its periphery has created a possibility of making distance with Liberal assumptions. Many usual theories like Federalism, Functionalism and new functionalism can not explain the causes of recent developments in this region. On the other side economic issues of the region have direct connection with internal politics of these states. It is necessary to consider power relations between national states, national interest, the principle of survival and in general, main assumptions of realism, to understand I. R. of Iran's relations with these countries. Extensive rivalry of different regional and trans regional states in the former republics of the Soviet Union and the dominant sphere of Iran's relations with the Eurasia countries, lead the authors to use realist approach for explanation of I. R. of Iran-Russia Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan's cooperation in the North- South international Corridor.

Gilpin's work reflects his attention to the role of power and the management of power by the state (Griffiths 2001, p. 12). In Gilpin's realist approach, issues of international relations are examined in a non-ideological way and a combination of state-centered realists such as Morgenthau and structuralist ideas such as Waltz is used to analyze the behavior of states (Gilpin 2000, p. 28-32). Governments are the most important, key and influential global players in politics and economics. National security is the main motive and basis of the behavior of international actors. Accordingly, governments seek to use the economy to increase their power. Politics, therefore, regulates the economic behavior of governments. Economic analysis is inseparable from political analysis of phenomena in international relations. According to Gilpin, realists pay attention to the relationship between international politics, international economics and the economic dimensions of governance (Gilpin 1984, p. 293).

Results

1. North-South International Transportation Corridor

Transportation corridors beyond transportation infrastructure make trade between countries, provinces and regions more competitive by refining transportation and logistics services (Islamic Development Bank 2011, p. 4). Reducing costs and time will increase business profits and make imports and exports more efficient. On the other hand, bilateral, trilateral and multilateral agreements between countries and other technologies to facilitate trade require a reduction in costs and time provided by international corridors (Islamic Development Bank 2011, p. 5). Thus, international transport corridors can increase a country's competitive advantage.

The North-South Corridor provides direct access to Central Asia and Central Eurasia for India. At the same time, it allows I. R. of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan to become the transportation hubs of the region. Forecasts show that by 2030, Asia's consumption rate will increase, in which case the importance of such infrastructure will increase) Passi 2017, p. 4). The North-South Corridor has become the fastest transit route between Mumbai and St. Petersburg. The route could reduce the existing sea route through the Suez Canal from 16,000 to 7,200 km and reduce travel time between South Asia and Northern Europe from 60 to 30 days. This crossing can be the north-south counterpart for the East-West Silk Road crossing (Moshashai 2019). This corridor has various goals that can be increased to expand the effectiveness of transport relations, increase access to international markets through various routes in the member countries of the Agreement; helping to increase the volume of international transport, ensuring travel security, safety of goods in accordance with international standards, harmonizing transport policies and creating equal and non-discriminatory conditions for all types of transport service providers from all sides in the transport of passengers and goods within the framework North-South Transport Corridor (Singh & Sharma 2017). The north-south corridor has different east and west routes. The eastern route of this corridor was built according to the Ashgabat agreement (Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan 2014). Cooperation between I. R. of Iran, Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan is reflected in the western route of this corridor.

2. Relations between I. R. of Iran and the Russian Federation

In the past, I. R. of Iran-Russia relations were more political and military and economic-political elements were less prominent. During the Cold War and the rivalry of the superpowers, I. R. of Iran was the scene of confrontation between these powers and influence in such a way that each tried to make the most of its relationship with Iran and weaken the other side's position. Stalin's presidency over the Soviet Communist Party can be considered the culmination of this conflict between the two blocs (Sakwa 1980, p. 280. (From the late 1960s, with the establishment of a regular shipping line, Soviet ships transported Iranian goods from Iranian ports to Baku and European countries (Koolae

2011, p. 115). Therefore, Moscow is discussing various issues and important foreign policy topics with Tehran. In addition, I. R. of Iran did not take radical action in the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was an important factor in Russia's tendency to cooperate with Iran (Kozhanov 2015, p. 8). The North-South corridor came to the fore as Putin introduced the idea of a large, normative modern power as the main idea of Russian foreign policy. In line with this policy, bilateral cooperation with I. R. of Iran and positive interaction with the west began simultaneously. In mid-2012, Russia became concerned about its position in Western Asia following the Arab uprisings. For this reason, I. R. of Iran was considered an important base in the region. The signing of the joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA) then the coming to power of Donald Trump and the withdrawal of the United States from it, the widespread sanctions against I. R. of Iran and the whispers about the expansion of comprehensive relations between Russia and the United States shaped Iran-Russia relations during Putin's fourth term. It should be noted that the prospect of any warm relations between Russia and the United States encourages Russia to renounce its ties with Iran especially in the military field. Russia's trade with I. R. of Iran in recent decades and its view of the Middle East has provided much to Russia. In the context of Russia's view of the West and Medvedev's "reset policy", the relationship with I. R. of Iran was used for diplomatic bargaining (Kozhanov 2020, p. 14). After the war in Syria, there were signs of divergence in I. R. of Iran-Russia relations as the two countries have different interests and goals in West Asia. In 2016, Russia sought to involve I. R. of Iran in the process of regional and global integration. In 2015, President Rouhani was invited by Russia to attend the BRICS summit in Ufa. Russia's goal of inviting I. R. of Iran to the non-Western union which is made up of emerging economies was higher than economic goals. This action is more relevant than anything else to Russia's behavior in countering US unilateralism (Suchkov & Vasilenko 2019, p. 77). During Putin's presidency, Russia has always sought to pit I. R. of Iran against US policies as a regional power in a concert of countries alongside it.

The culmination of I. R. of Iran-Russia cooperation in Southwest Asia can be traced to the post-Arab spring crisis in Syria in 2012, followed by intelligence, strategic, technical and operational cooperation between the two countries to help contain the crisis in Syria. The importance of Syria for the two countries made cooperation possible in this regard (Koolae 2018, p. 4). Overall, the Ukraine crisis, Russian sanctions, I. R. of Iran's nuclear talks and Russia's military incursion into Syria have increased its focus on I. R. of Iran's role in the Middle East.

Sanctions on I. R. of Iran and Russia have made the two countries interested in expanding trade ties between themselves. In this regard, Russia is trying to establish agreements between the Eurasian Economic Union and I. R. of Iran on the establishment of free trade zones. Sanctions and economic ties between I. R. of Iran and Russia especially in the form of the Eurasian Economic Union have established cordial relations between the two countries. According to President Rouhani, the relationship between the two countries is unprecedented in 500 years (Islamian 2019). I. R. of Iran can rely on Putin's Eurasianist approach and improve relations with the Middle East relying on its geo-strategic superiority and the shift in Moscow's policy toward itself in recent years to take advantage of its

competitive advantage in transportation and trade to become an effective player in Eurasia with the west and South Asia. Therefore, increasing the activity in the form of the Eurasian Union is very effective. Since the integration of the transportation and support sectors is an important prerequisite for the formation of a modern model of business interaction and is very effective in creating a coherent supply chain management, this union seeks to expand the transport infrastructure (Almetova et al 2019, p. 3). The free trade agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union and I. R. of Iran shows the importance of this country for Russia. Since the start of this cooperation in October 2019, I. R. of Iran's non-oil trade with EU member states has increased which can create a window of hope for I. R. of Iran in the face of US economic sanctions (Grajewski 2020, p. 33). Given the union's significant market for I. R. of Iran and South Asian countries, especially India, there is a good opportunity for I. R. of Iran to become one of the most important routes for the transfer of goods and services between this union and the South Asian region through the North-South corridor.

Like political relations, I. R. of Iran- Russia economic relations is under the influence of Russia's regional and international goals. I. R. of Iran's economic problems, especially the impacts of sanctions, and Russia- I. R. of Iran rivalry in the field of energy transition from the Caspian region, Kosovo crisis and Chechnia War had negative impact on their economic relations (Koolae, Abedi 2017, p. 144-143). Russia's Putin has tried to make balance between Internal necessities and regional and international condition (Koolae, Nori, 2007, p. 39). However, these relations have gradually expanded from the second term of Putin's presidency, especially after signing the long term agreement for collaboration between the two countries and close contacts of the Federal Office of Standardization of Russian Federation and I. R. of Iran

(Koolae, Abedi 2017, p. 150). They signed an agreement for expanding bilateral tourism activities.

3. Relations between the Islamic Republic of I. R. of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan

The I. R. of Iran-Russian Federation-Republic of Azerbaijan Triangle will include extensive economic and communication cooperation for the three countries which according to I. R. of Iran sanctions, the relationship between the three countries can be reflected (Bayramov, Alili 2018, p. 5). Cultural and religious ties are one of the most important indicators of the closeness of the two countries (Davoodi 2016, p. 261). The divergence components of the two countries are the product of the rivalries of the great powers in the geopolitics of the region and the historical-cultural memory of the two countries which emphasizes the need for technical and economic cooperation between the two countries. The North-South Corridor is an example of technical-economic cooperation that can increase convergence between the two countries.

The Baku government joined the process in 2005 with the aim of increasing its strategic importance and power in the South Caucasus. The North-South Corridor helps to improve the relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with I. R. of and Russia. In 2016,

following the lifting of sanctions, the Republic of Azerbaijan changed its policies towards I. R. of Iran (Katzman 2021, p. 40). A trilateral meeting of I. R. of Iran, Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan on infrastructure and transportation via the Republic of Azerbaijan was held. The establishment of the western part of the North-South corridor on the safe borders of the I. R. of Iran creates a suitable trade route for the international relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the Persian Gulf region (Hodaei 2019). Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan can gain economic benefits from the transfer of 15 to 20 million tons of goods in this strategic path (Valiyev, Mamishova 2019, p. 13).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the growing crisis between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the connection between I. R. of Iran and this region was cut off in practice by the national railway, so not only were trade ties severed, rather, it took on a domino effect of insecurity and rivalry between the great powers throughout the South Caucasus. The Nagorno-Karabakh war transformed the geopolitical region of the South Caucasus and created opportunities and impasse for the region's neighbors. The intensity of the war in 2020 and Russia's fear of disrupting regional order and Turkey's intervention to advance the outcome of the ceasefire in its favor created a new situation for the region's geopolitics. According to the ninth clause of the ceasefire agreement between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia, a passage must be created for Azeris to communicate with Nakhchivan. But the conditions of the regions that have been under Armenian rule for thirty years do not make the new route very favorable for the Azeris (Amirahmadian 2020, p. 29).

Against all the potentials and sources of expansion of I. R. of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, they have not experienced acceptable situation. Westernist tendencies in Baku and the desire of its leaders to expand relations with western countries, has limited the room in this regard. With respect to the quality of goods, which exchanged between the two countries, the North-South international Corridor can make more appropriate condition to accelerate the pace of their economic cooperation. Both of these countries are among the member states of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

4. Political and Economic Aspects of I. R. of Iran's National Security in the South Caucasus

Today, security has taken on a more civilian meaning and most governments seek it in economic-commercial development rather than militarization. Access to primary resources and markets necessary to maintain acceptable levels of welfare and government power has been introduced as economic security (Buzan 2017, p. 34). Some of the security threats in the region include arms smuggling, extremism and terrorism, the activities of spy groups and the presence and influence of regional and supra-regional powers in the Caucasus.

In addition to the cooperation of regional governments to reduce these threats, the North-South corridor is important in terms of facilitating economic-political cooperation between Iran and Central Eurasian countries. I. R. of Iran's presence in the Eurasian

Economic Union, reducing I. R. of Iran's political isolation, increasing regional talks, resolving I. R. of Iran's dispute with other Caspian littoral states over its share, the agreement of the members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) especially Russia with I. R. of Iran's permanent membership in this organization and Russia's agreement with I. R. of Iran's extensive relations with the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus are important issues. Facilitating transportation between I. R. of Iran and the region can help increase trade ties.

5. The study of the authors showed that important economic and legal factors in the economic security of the region namely

The study of the authors showed that important economic and legal factors in the economic security of the region namely: Increasing free trade (16%), improving the customs situation (15%), increasing the share of non-oil trade (15%), bringing trade laws in line with international standards (15%), improving the evaluation of international institutions and organizations (14%), increasing access to Facilities (13%), and security of basic goods (12%). Increasing free trade, will have the greatest impact on regional economic security. It can be concluded that cooperation in creating a north-south corridor with economic opening for I. R. of Iran also affects security and political aspects in the region such as reducing terrorism and extremism. Participation and cooperation in regional economic organizations are also influential in the field of political relations.

The new political economy pays particular attention to the efforts of private groups to exploit public facilities for personal gain. In international political economy, the study of international political economy requires an analytical approach that simultaneously considers economics, politics and other social sciences. Given the impact of economic factors on I. R. of Iran's cooperation to complete the North-South corridor, it is clear that the cooperation of the I. R. of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan in completing the North-South corridor by facilitating trade in the region has increased trade and economic mobility in the region and the transition of this economic and trade dynamics from the geographical direction of the region has economic and political effects on regional security. Its first effect is to increase free trade and trade infrastructure in the region and encourage the private sector to be more dynamic in the economic activities. These factors will increase trade and economic relations in the region and will reduce some security threats in the region, especially terrorism and extremism.

Conclusions

Cooperation between I. R. of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan in completing the North-South Corridor can lead to greater economic and political cooperation between them. Facilitating trade through transportation infrastructure makes sense. This roadmap requires the political will of the member states to complete. That is, it

requires stable economic and political relations of the member states. Measures such as I. R. of Iran's membership in the Eurasian Union, the desire of the Republic of Azerbaijan to become a regional transportation hub and Russia's attention to I. R. of Iran's geopolitics can increase the will to complete the missing links in this passage. Given the current needs of international trade, competitive advantage and the basis of competition between national governments in the global economy are important. As Gilpin writes, the internal situation of countries in their type of activity, in particular, affects their competitive advantage. Our competitive advantage is reflected in the domestic economic situation and the infrastructure of the freight route. What has been said about the advantages of the north-south corridor largely demonstrates its competitive advantage over other routes. I. R. of Iran's security and political stability is another advantage that this passage has over other land routes for the transfer of goods. Given the competition between I. R. of Iran and Russia in energy trade, the North-South corridor to have the necessary competitive advantage, requires strong political leverage based on I. R. of Iran's economy and cooperative actions with Eurasian countries.

The impact of economic factors such as free trade, customs status and security of basic goods is greater than political factors of security such as terrorism, extremism and the presence of major powers. Therefore, the north-south corridor in the cooperation phase and also after the full commissioning, while affecting economic factors such as increasing trade, will also indirectly affect political factors. By facilitating trade and increasing I. R. of Iran's access to world trade, this cooperation in addition to increasing the role of the private sector in free trade can also affect the elimination of regional threats and increase political exchanges between the countries of this region. Increasing trade can improve economic-political relations and in turn expand political-economic relations of entities like the Eurasian Economic Union to countries in the region such as I. R. of Iran. I. R. of Iran's presence in regional arrangements is an important step in reducing its isolation. This will be an important factor in creating the right conditions and being in a larger global trade environment.

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