

PECULIARITIES OF CULTURAL PART OF NEW GREAT GAME IN THE CASPIAN REGION IN TERMS OF GAMES

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ABSTRACT

The Caspian region having cross-boundary specifics is now a center of attraction for various countries and powers that are interested in hydrocarbon reserves of the region, its geopolitical location and political impact on the Caspian countries that include former Soviet states in order to achieve their own geopolitical goals. Under these circumstances, the Russian Federation needs to choose the dominant strategy of action in the region that will enable to activate the relations between Russia and the Caspian states in various spheres including cultural and humanitarian cooperation. A cultural diplomacy can and must become such a strategy in a New Great Game for the Caspian region. Its effective component includes support of the compatriots, offer of educational programs at Russian universities and other educational institutions, promotion of the Russian language and literature. In the future all this will allow to achieve better results in the spread of the Russian soft power in the countries of “the Caspian four”, provided that this geopolitical resource is conceptualized, and active, not discreet steps, are made. To define effective strategy for soft power implementation in the Caspian region the game theory and the so-called Prisoner’s dilemma can be used. The latter has long been used for assessment and forecast the effectiveness of the international cooperation.

Keywords: *the Caspian region, soft power, cultural diplomacy, New Great Game, the game theory, actors, support of the compatriots, offer of educational programs, promotion of the Russian language and literature, Prisoner’s dilemma, optimal strategy.*

INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and some consequential processes, the significance of the Caspian region increased greatly because of its advantageous geopolitical location and discovery of new fields of hydrocarbon resources. Most of the modern experts suppose that it is the place where the shapes of the modern world order are contoured because this is where the “knot” of global and regional problems is located. Besides, the interests of different countries, even of distant ones, civilizations and peoples meet here.

For Russia, the Caspian region is a historically important territory. In spite of the fact that nowadays we see active “outside forces” in the Caspian region, it is evident that Russia is a key player in the New Great Game. It is, first of all, explained by historical and cultural interrelations between the countries of the region. Imperial Russia, and then the Soviet Union the

successor of which Russia is, were always influential in the region. This fact laid the foundation for the special position of Russia in the Caspian region.

Thus, nowadays the Russian Federation needs to choose the dominant strategy for its actions in the region that will enable to activate the relations between Russia and the Caspian countries in various spheres including cultural and humanitarian cooperation. A cultural diplomacy can and must become such a strategy in the New Great Game for the Caspian region. The author’s rights for the New Great Game concept is believed to belong to a foreign policy expert A. Rashid. He introduced it in one of his articles while working for “Far Eastern Economic Review”. The New Great Game concept became popular in Russia as well, partly due to the program series “Big Game” made by journalist and publicist M. Leontyev.

It is the culture, including cultural diplomacy as one of the most important resources of soft power, which nowadays is becoming one of the most important country's strategies in the choice of tools for implementing the chosen foreign policy.

The essence of the cultural diplomacy is to exchange ideas, information, and knowledge in the cultural field in order to improve understanding between the peoples living in these countries [17]. The main task of the cultural diplomacy is to support the population of a foreign country in understanding the national priorities and goals, the institutional system of the country-partner in order to form a group of people loyal to the country-partner. Thus, it will contribute to the intensification of the further development of economic and political ties between the countries [16]. Being a part of the social diplomacy, cultural diplomacy makes it possible to reinforce the influence of a country-partner on the foreign audience by popularizing its cultural values. It happens by means of publishing information about this country in foreign media, organizing art and literature shows, film exhibitions aiming to create a positive image of a country-partner and to spread complimentary information on the Internet [15].

Ultimately, the goal of the cultural diplomacy is to influence the foreign audience and use this influence as, so to say, a goodwill. Goodwill means intangible assets of the country-actor in the international relations: the country's positive image abroad, presence of loyal to a country-partner groups of people in a target country, etc., used to support your country's policy abroad.

In terms of political geography, the Caspian region includes five Caspian countries: The Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan. But, from the geopolitical point of view the concept "the Caspian region" can hardly be limited by these countries. Thus, there are many opinions about the meaningful part of the concept "the Caspian region" [1]. In the article speaking about the Caspian region and its actors we will focus on the countries of the "close circle". From the one hand, it definitely simplifies understanding the situation, and from the second hand, it lets better visualize the model of interaction between the interested countries which are united by the mutual cultural and historical history of longstanding and close relations. At the same time, seeing the Caspian region as the object of the historical and cultural analysis we must note that the main part of the 20th century until the early 1990s the four players - Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were the part of one Soviet "organism". They interacted in the sphere of culture within one state policy of the USSR but with significant national features.

All the actors are connected with Iran through a historical "tail" of complex and uneven relations. One of the hardest periods was the Second World War in the beginning of which Iran's leadership presented by the shah (Reza-Shah, Reza Pahlavi (15.03.1878 - 26.07.1944) was the thirty-fourth Iranian shah from 1925 to 1941, and a representative of Pahlavi dynasty) converged to fascist Germany. However, after the entry of the British and Soviet forces into Iran on January 29, 1942, The Treaty of Alliance between the USSR, Great Britain, and Iran was concluded. On December 1, 1943, the Declaration of the three powers regarding Iran, which confirmed its sovereignty after the war, was made. Under these circumstances, the Soviet Union in order to create a loyal attitude of the Iranians to the presence of its military forces on their territory used a whole variety of tools. They included publication of leaflets and newspapers "Daily News", "Friend of Iran", design of photo displays with the news from the theater of war, TASS windows and windows with the newspapers published by the Soviet forces, demonstration of Soviet films by military mobile units and oral agitation with the use of loudspeaker equipment. Starting from 1944 there appeared radio stations in Tabriz, Qazvin, Khoy, Mashhad and Semnan. At first, they were used to broadcast radio programs of Moscow, Baku and Ashgabat radio stations in Russian, Persian, Azerbaijani and Turkmen. Later alongside broadcasting programs of these radio stations, the usual local radio programs started to be broadcasted constantly. In addition, a Soviet radio broadcast in Persian was organized through Tehran radio station.

A multi-vector character of the Russian cultural diplomacy in the Caspian region in the beginning of the 20th century as an implementation of the soft power concept

In the beginning of the 21st century, Russia's cultural diplomacy with the Caspian countries is based on bilateral and multilateral agreements, and the forms of these relations have a multi-vector character. Thus, relations between Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of cultural and scientific cooperation are fulfilled on the base of several intergovernmental agreements. The key event of the cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the countries is Baku International Humanitarian Forum held under the patronage of the presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan in order to discuss meaningful to both countries' current humanitarian issues. In 2014, Baku held events dedicated to the 200th anniversary of M.Y. Lermontov birth. A large number of cultural events with the participation of the Russian artists are organized: drama, opera and ballet performances, popular concerts, performances of Moscow circus troupes. Kalmyk National Drama Theater named after B. Basangov, Moscow Art Theater, Saint-

Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, Astrakhan State Opera and Ballet Theater, concerts of scholarship holders of I.N. Voronova fund "New Names" and of Derbent Azerbaijan State Theater of the Republic of Dagestan successfully tour in Azerbaijan with a certain periodicity. An important aspect of the humanitarian cooperation between the countries is preservation of spiritual ties between two peoples and reinforcement of an intercultural dialog. Baku-Azerbaijan diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church under which there is an Orthodox religious and cultural center is among organizations that do this work. Baku branch of Lomonosov Moscow State University with participation of the leading professors of the MSU has been successfully operating since 2008. Baku branch of Lomonosov Moscow State University with the participation of the leading professors of MSU has been successfully operating since 2008.

The visual reflection of this new turn in the humanitarian relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan include pictures on the railing of the pedestrian bridge that goes from G. Aliev square to the Volga embankment where the monument to Peter the Great is located. It also includes meaningful to Baku and Astrakhan architectural objects like the Maiden Tower and the Astrakhan Kremlin.

In Astana, Kazakhstan, there is the Russian Science and Education Center that organizes events dedicated to the anniversaries of Russian cultural figures. For example, there were held events dedicated to the anniversaries of L.N. Tolstoy (190th anniversary of birth) and I.S. Turgenev (200th anniversary), as well as the 95th anniversary of birth of a Dagestan poet R. Gamzatov. Pupils of Kazakhstan schools take part in a traditional national academic competition "And We Will Preserve You, the Russian Language, the Great Russian Word". Its aim is to find talented pupils who want to get higher education in the field of Russian Studies. Russian Language Day as part of the Day of Slavic Writing and Culture is widely celebrated. Educational institutions, libraries, museums, and concert halls are the venues for the cultural and historical events.

The State Russian Drama Theater named after A.S. Pushkin continues its work in Turkmenistan. In Ashgabat there is a Turkmen-Russian secondary school named after A.S. Pushkin, which is the center of the Russian culture. Annually the school organizes Days of Russian language arts, literature, and music events. The school has its own drama theater. Every year on the 9th of May, celebrations dedicated to the Victory in the Second World War are organized in all regions of the country. One of the significant and specific fields of humanitarian collaboration includes joint Turkmen-

Russian archaeological expeditions on the territory of Turkmenistan [11].

A cultural dialog between Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran has mainly gained traction after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. In the second decade of the 21st century there were such significant events as participation of the delegations of both countries in the international book fairs (2016), participation of Russian and Iranian scientists at the scientific forum dedicated to the 515th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries (2017, Tehran), organization of the 8th Regional Olympiad of Persian Language and Literature (the Russian Federation and CIS countries), a tour of a Russian puppet theater in Iran, opening of the Center "Russian World" in Tehran University and many other [6].

Humanitarian and cultural cooperation of Russia with other Caspian countries includes: support of the compatriots, offer of educational programs at Russian universities and other educational institutions, promotion of the Russian language and literature. In our opinion in the future all this will allow to achieve better results in the spread of the Russian soft power in the countries of "the Caspian four", provided that this geopolitical resource is conceptualized, and active, not discreet steps, are made.

Search for an optimal actors' strategy in the cultural diplomacy as an implementation of the soft power concept in terms of the game theory.

The game theory is a search for an effective strategy in conditions of a conflict. A conflict is understood as misalignment of the players' (actors') interests. The game theory, which appeared as a theoretical and methodological field, is now actively used in various fields including political science. In this case, the game is actually seen as a process of defending state interests in the international arena. Thus, game rules in terms of the game theory context are a profile (a number) of strategies and the player needs to choose an optimal strategy (to make a decision) on the basis of his own goals and resources. The best situation is when the player partially knows the goals and possibilities of another player or players. That makes it possible to coordinate your own actions and participate in a cooperation game. In the political sphere game rules in the broadest sense are fixed in treaties, agreements, codes of international law. The unformalized component of the game as part of the international processes includes the trust of the parties. With a high degree of possibility, its existence makes it possible to achieve good results in cooperation.

If actors interact in conditions of uncertainty and political turbulence, in order to choose an optimal strategy when the interests partially do not coincide, the

prisoner's dilemma as a non-cooperation matrix game can be used. In the game, each player has two strategies, for example "to cooperate" and "not to cooperate".

The choice of the cultural diplomacy by the countries is a focal point that unites positions of the leaders of the Caspian countries. The choice of the strategy "to cooperate" lets the player accumulate financial resources sent to the target country to implement its own cultural policy; rationally use organizational resources; avoid doubling the projects that are already being implemented or are planned to be implemented in the target country by another country-actor of the New Great Game. Besides, the choice and implementation of the real strategy enables to increase transparency during organization and implementation of various events in terms of the chosen cultural diplomacy.

What is more, the target country choosing the strategy "to cooperate" also wins because a unified organized strategy of the partnership with the country is more efficient and successful and makes it possible to gain the maximum output from the implementation of programs and projects in the field of cultural and humanitarian cooperation with the countries of the region. Considering the above, the model of cooperation is the most optimal one in the New Great Game from the point of view of humanitarian cooperation [10, 14].

CONCLUSION

Thus, it would be reasonable for the modern actors of the New Great Game to continue cooperation because this partnership will make it possible to achieve the synergy of the attempts and will contribute to the increase of a general well-being of the population both in the countries-players and in the target countries. However, Russia needs to conceptualize the Russian model of soft power taking into consideration the specifics of its territory and historical "trail" of the intercultural interaction. And, of course, as experts believe, the success of the Russian soft power in the Caspian region and in general, in the future will depend on the attractiveness of the social and economic model implemented by Russia in its foreign and domestic policy [12].

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