

Critical Analysis of the Caspian: The Role of Identity in Russia's Foreign Policy

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Abstract : This paper attempts to offer an alternative to the explanation of the politics of great powers in Caspian politics. Since many researchers have analysed the politics of great powers in the region with the focus on materialism, this paper attempts to bring a sociological inquiry into analysing inter-state behaviour. The constructivist concept of Alexander Wendt will be applied to analyse Russia's relation with The United States, China and Iran; the main argument is emphasis on the power of ideational forces over material ones. Moreover, the innovative contribution of Wendt regarding the understanding of anarchy to the study of International Relations (IR) will be applied; in his words, 'anarchy is what states make of it'. A neo-realist perspective implies that with the structure of international politics, Russia treats all great powers as rivals through engagement in power politics; however, Wendt's approach is able to explain the reason behind the state's behaviour towards power politics, and this is about not only international structure, but also identity. The understanding of identity answers the question of how Russia came about to follow different actions in relation to Iran and China in contrast to The United States. This paper will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will explain the constructivism of Alexander Wendt; the second chapter will give a brief background to The Caspian Sea Region (CSR); the third chapter will explain the formation of Russia's identity towards The United States, and this will be applied to analyse Russia's relation to The U.S in The CSR. Similarly with China, the fourth chapter will explain Russia's identity and its relations in The CSR, and finally, the fifth chapter will show Russia's identity towards Iran and its relation to Iran in The CSR. It will be concluded that the analysis of the politics between great powers in seeking to access one of the richest regions, The Caspian Basin, will show that international politics is not fixed, but constructed by human action and cognition. Reality in the politics of great powers in The Caspian Sea Region is socially constructed. This paper is not interested in how things are, but how they became what they are. That is to say, how Russia's foreign policies towards great powers became what they are.

Keywords : Alexander Wendt, Caspian sea, identity, Russia, socially constructed

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