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# State of communication regimes in the area of the Greater Caspian Sea

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Abstract. The Caspian region is considered in the area of the modern geopolitical project "Big Caspian" and the space forming it. Within the framework of this configuration, it is advisable to investigate the totality of factors and their causal relationships of development. This format is determined by two interrelated processes: the state of the geopolitical landscape, as well as the friendliness of communication regimes. The first defines the political and economic integration procedures that are associated with the deepening of mutually beneficial multilateral cooperation relations in the post-Soviet space. Of particular importance is the Russian initiative to form the Greater Eurasian Partnership as a new architecture of international security and civilizational Eurasian development. The second is determined by the multivector orientation of strengthening international cultural and humanitarian cooperation and the interface of communication regimes of neighboring states. The synchronization of these theoretical studies is gaining increased attention, the relevance of which is increasing within the framework of the updated Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. The research is based on methods of systemic interdisciplinary analysis, statistical and historical assessments, political-analytical and other dimensions.

**Keywords:** the Great Caspian Sea, area, geopolitical space, monitoring, communications, communication regimes, cultural and humanitarian cooperation

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# Состояние коммуникационных режимов на пространстве Большого Каспия

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Аннотация. Каспийский регион рассматривается в ареале современного геополитического проекта «Большой Каспий» и пространства его формирующего. В рамках данной конфигурации целесообразно исследовать совокупность факторов и их причинно-следственные связи развития. формат определяется двумя Данный взаимосвязанными проиессами: геополитического ландшафта, а также дружественности коммуникационных режимов. Первый определяет политико-экономические интеграционные процедуры, которые связаны с углублением взаимовыгодных многосторонних отношений сотрудничества на постсоветском пространстве. Особую значимость приобретает российская инициатива формирования Большого Евразийского партнерства как новой архитектуры международной безопасности и цивилизационного евразийского развития. Второй определяется многовекторной направленностью укрепления международного культурно-гуманитарного сотрудничества и сопряжения коммуникационных режимов сопредельных государств. Синхронизация указанных теоретических исследований приобретает повышенное внимание, актуальность которых возрастает в рамках обновленной Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации. В основу изысканий положены методы системного междисциплинарного анализа, статистических и исторических оценок, политикоаналитические и другие измерения.

**Ключевые слова:** Большой Каспий, ареал, геополитическое пространство, мониторинг, коммуникации, коммуникационные режимы, культурно-гуманитарное сотрудничество

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**Introduction.** The problems of research in the Caspian region have been sufficiently described in the scientific literature, but in modern geopolitical and communication conditions it acquires more voluminous and interconnected dimensions, actualizing the combined potential of influence of a significant number of factors.

In the process of development of globalization and internationalization, analytical studies of international relations that form a single global market space acquire theoretical and practical significance [4, p. 174].

The updated Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (dated 31.03.2023) is aimed at strengthening mutual understanding, developing and establishing "friendly relations between states, strengthening traditional spiritual and moral values as a unifying principle for all of humanity, as well as enhancing Russia's role in the global humanitarian space" [16].

Of particular importance is the Russian initiative to form a Greater Eurasian Partnership as a new architecture of international security and civilizational Eurasian development, which allows for the unification of efforts of regional states and international organizations, as well as the consolidation of the communication potential of the countries and peoples of these entities.

**Materials and research methods.** The article provides an analytical geopolitical assessment of the current state and trends of interaction between the countries of the Greater Caspian Sea, which form the Eurasian space and the foundations of the new world economic order.

The interdisciplinary and rather multi-vector nature of political communications between neighboring states not only acts as problematic issues of interaction, but also requires the development of a new paradigm and research tools. They are based on a structural-functional approach, which made it possible to use methods of systemic institutional analysis and updated methods of methodological support.

**Research results and their discussion.** Within the framework of the set tasks and interdisciplinary approach, we study the set of factors and their cause-and-effect relationships of the modern development of the Eurasian area.

Geopolitical landscape of the Greater Caspian

According to the regional theory, the geopolitical peculiarity of this landscape is determined by the coverage of the configuration of countries of three rather complex and heterogeneous mesoregions: the Caspian region, Central Asia and Transcaucasia. Based on the multi-vector foreign policy of these states, as well as the influence of extra-regional actors, a significant number of international organizations operate in the Greater Caspian space: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU); the Caspian region countries (CRC); the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO); the Organization of Turkic States (OTG); the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) (Table 1).

Table 1 – Composition of states and international organizations covering the Central Asian region

Countries	International organizations									
	CIS	EAEU	SPR	CSTO	SCO	OTG	CICA			
Central Asian countries (CA)										
Kazakhstan X X X X X X X X										
Kyrgyzstan	X	X	-	X	X	X	X			
Tajikistan	X	-	-	X	X	-	X			
Turkmenistan	X 1	-	X	-	-	X 1	X 1			
Uzbekistan	X	X <sup>2</sup>	-	-	X	X	X			
Caspian Region Countries (CRC)										
Azerbaijan	X	-	X	-	X <sup>3</sup>	X	X			
Iran	-	-	X	-	X	-	X			
Russia	X	X	X	X	X	-	X			
Countries of Transcaucasia										
Armenia	X	X	-	X	X 4	-	-			
Georgia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			

Note.

The countries of the Caspian region "are part of integration blocks, international organizations and projects whose tasks include interaction in the sphere of economy, transport and logistics" [7, p. 56]. At the same time, the dominant position is occupied by the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, extending their area of influence to the states of the Caspian region and key areas of influence of geopolitical and energy systems [4, p. 175].

In this context, the Greater Caspian can be considered as an important "intracontinental transit crossroad" [3, p. 12], possessing huge reserves of natural hydrocarbon resources and transport and logistics potential. On the other hand, this space is characterized as a geopolitical arc of instability, within which a variety of integration forms of interaction are formed, from regional to global [13, p. 63]. A qualitatively new factor is the transboundary clustering of the Caspian region, based on the struggle for a fair distribution of international rights and resources, including scientific and technological progress and technology (artificial intelligence, scientific and educational communications) [10, p. 5].

It is obvious that Russia and Kazakhstan form the basic foundation of the Greater Caspian Space. As active members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union, in conjunction with the Chinese initiative "One Belt - One Road", they participate in the formation of joint multimodal transport systems [4, p. 182], as well as the "North-South" transport corridor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Turkmenistan: associate member of the CIS; observer in the Joint Territorial Group and CICA;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Uzbekistan: observer in the EAEU;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Azerbaijan : SCO dialogue partners;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Armenia: Dialogue partner. Source: compiled by authors

The ideology of modern cooperation should be aimed at achieving not competitive, but partnership advantages, ensuring the inclusion of each entity in mutually beneficial relations with other entities [8, p. 9]. To this end, Russia must diversify foreign economic relations, shifting the emphasis from the resource component to compliance with the priority of national interests in integration interaction, the development of effective mechanisms for maintaining economic and political stability within and along the perimeter of state borders [12, p. 59].

The landscape of friendliness of communication modes

The heterogeneity of the geopolitical landscape creates a diversity and multi-vector development of friendly and relatively friendly regimes, which are characterized by changes in foreign policy events and certain transformational sentiments.

The level of regional cooperation depends on the degree of interaction between different regimes and their ability to create integration associations that limit the interference of these institutions in the internal affairs of weaker regimes in order to ensure their own survival [2, p. 17]. Moreover, the stability of such associations can be maintained with a balanced combination of the global economic interests of participants at all levels of interaction: local, regional and global.

The modern concept of "communication" covers a broad scope of content. In the generally accepted perception, it represents "a connection, a relationship between phenomena that may belong to one or different systems," supporting the system or interaction between subsystems and creating a system at a higher, general level [1, p. 38].

The Russian National Research Institute for the Development of Communications (NIIRC) is a center for the development of methodology, research and forecasting of intercountry and intercultural communications. The concept of communication modes proposed by it has been tested in the countries of the post-Soviet space, and the results obtained were reflected in the third analytical report for 2023 [10].

According to the definition of the Research Institute of the Russian Federation, a communication regime is understood as a controlled, institutionalized, conventional system of norms, rules, principles, traditions, structures and actors that regulates information and communication processes [9, p. 166]. The presence of a significant number of subjects makes it possible to build a wide range of relations with various, including non-governmental and non-profit organizations [11, p. 13].

The integrated ratings of the friendliness of countries of communication regimes towards Russia, adapted by us in relation to the conditions of spatial development of the Greater Caspian, are presented in Table 2.

		Vanus	Deviation (+, -)				
Countries		Years	Total	including			
	2021	2022	2023	2023 - 2021	2022 - 2021	2023 - 2022	
I. Friendly countries (modes)							
1. Belarus	70.6 (2)	88.4(1)	87.6 (1)	17.0	17.8	-0.8	
2. Kyrgyzstan	58.1 (4)	60.6 (2)	60.3 (2)	2,2	2.5	-0.3	
3. Uzbekistan	48.1 (7)	59.3 (3)	55.2 (4)	7.1	11.2	-4.1	
4. Kazakhstan	71.0(1)	58.4 (4)	50.0 (6)	-21.0	-12.6	-8.4	
5. Armenia	61.7 (3)	58.3 (5)	46.0 (8)	-15.7	-3.4	-12.3	
6. Tajikistan	55.1 (6)	57.9 (6)	58.7 (3)	3.6	2.8	0.8	
7. Azerbaijan	57.7 (5)	57.0 (7)	50.1 (5)	-7.6	-0.7	-6.9	
8. Turkmenistan	14.5 (8)	47.1 (8)	47.1 (7)	32.6	32.6	-	

Table 2 – Dynamics of friendliness of communication modes to Russia Federations on space Big Caspian for 2021-2023, %

Total, average arithmetic	54.6	60.9	56.9	2,3	6.3	-4.0			
II . Relatively friendly countries (regimes)									
9. Georgia	4.4 (10)	24.2 (9)	12.0 (9)	7.6	19.8	-12.2			

Note: Rating scale: friendly (+100); in brackets – place.

Belarus is included in the Greater Caspian Sea area as a country that is part of the Union State of Russia and Belarus. Source: compiled and calculated by the author based on data from [10, 11]

The obtained dynamic series are quite heterogeneous and are represented by both a group of friendly and relatively friendly regimes. The indicators of changes in friendliness parameters for 2021-2023 indicate a transformation of sentiments in the post-Soviet space both during the period of Russia's military operations in Ukraine and in the context of the growing global crisis.

Despite unprecedented sanctions and political pressure from the collective West, the average indicator of communication modes with friendly countries increased by 6.3% in 2022. Turkmenistan, Belarus and Uzbekistan made a significant positive contribution. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan saw minor positive changes, while Kazakhstan (minus 12.6%) and Azerbaijan (minus 0.7%) reacted negatively to foreign policy processes. The latter is also associated with domestic political processes - the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the attempted coup d'état in Kazakhstan .

The growing influence of global foreign policy actors, which is accompanied by increasing polarization of the modern world and civilizational rift, as well as the transformation of the international security system, continues to have a negative impact on the state of communication relations. According to the results of 2023, the indicators of friendliness in the Greater Caspian area have significantly worsened in all countries except Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and their average value has decreased by 4.0% compared to 2022. The most noticeable decrease was made in Kazakhstan, Armenia and Georgia, which is explained by the "independent foreign multi-vector policy" of the leaders of these countries.

Of particular relevance are the groupings of profiles of friendliness of communication modes towards Russia (Table 3).

Table 3 – Friendliness profile for the main components of communication modes for 2022 - 2023 , in points

Friendly countries									Ma			
Year	Belar	Kyrgyzst	Uzbekist	Kazakhst	Armen	Tajikist	Azerbaij	Turkmenist	x.			
s	us	an	an	an	ia	an	an	an	scor			
									e			
	Foreign policy communications, including Russia's status as a partner											
2022	13.6	9.1	10.0	11.1	10.3	11.3	9.9	0,0	17.3			
2023	13.6	7.5	8.6	7.0	2.6	8.8	5.0	8.8	14.5			
	Attitude towards Russia, Russians, ethnic Russians within the country											
2022	10.1	6.3	8.0	7.5	6.5	5.6	6.7	1.5	10.4			
2023	13.3	7.9	6.4	4.8	6.2	6.4	6.3	6.3	15.0			
	Economic communications											
2022	7.2	7.5	6.6	7.5	7.9	4.5	6.1	1,2	8.8			
2023	6.5	4.5	5.6	4.6	4.9	5.1	5.3	5.5	7.0			
			F	Educational c	ommunica	tions						
2022	6.9	6.9	7.9	7.7	7.4	7.5	8.1	3.1	8.9			
2023	9.6	7.1	5.6	7.0	6.8	7.4	7.1	5.0	10.6			
Scientific communications												
2022	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.1	4.5	4.5	2.7	5.0			
2023	6.2	4.8	4.0	4.8	4.0	4.6	4.2	4.5	6.8			
	Cultural communications											

2022	13.2	12.3	11.7	12.4	12.8	12.1	13.4	7.7	17.3	
2023	11.8	8.3	7.6	4.8	6.5	8.5	6.8	6.8	13.3	
	Media communications									
2022	7.4	6.2	6.7	7.7	6.5	7.5	6.8	0,1	10.0	
2023	6.8	5.0	4.5	3.4	2,2	4.7	3.3	3.0	7.1	
	NGO Communications									
2022	3.5	2.4	3.0	3.3	2.8	4.9	2,2	-1.7	7.0	
2023	8.6	7.3	5.3	6.3	4.6	5.3	4.6	3.3	12.5	
	Freedom of movement									
2022	1.4	1.9	1.5	2.1	2.1	2,2	1.5	1,2	2.4	
2023	2.4	1.8	0.8	1.4	2.0	2.7	1.5	1.8	2.7	

Source: compiled and calculated by the author based on data from [10, 11]

An assessment of the state of the main elements of the communications profile shows that cultural, educational and economic relations occupy a special place in strengthening the friendliness of countries in the post-Soviet space. Due to the expansion of the main components of the survey in 2023 in the field of youth, religious and inter-religious communications, the structure of the maximum scores has undergone changes. It should be noted that there has been a noticeable increase in the specified parameters for the following groups of components: "Attitude towards Russia, Russians, ethnic Russians within the country", "Educational communications", "Scientific communications", "Communications of NPOs" and "Freedom of movement", the values of the indicators for which have increased significantly.

According to monitoring studies, a higher level of friendly relations is noted in relation to Russia, Russians and ethnic Russians within the country (Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan). Sustainable communications are observed in the sphere of science and education. According to prof. V.V. Komleva, the Russian Federation should be considered a political ally and partner, and the weight of economic communications through projects and plans for cooperation should increase significantly, strengthening the foreign policy vectors of post-Soviet states [10, pp. 46-47].

The tension in foreign policy relations with Armenia has boomeranged on the quality of communication links with Azerbaijan. The partnership links between Kazakhstan and Russia are experiencing a special period of cooperation and partnership. According to independent domestic and foreign experts, many countries are experiencing a process of politicization of history in a modern interpretation. The ongoing change of generations is accompanied by information dominance by the ruling political elite and the growth of a "new" worldview of the younger generation of citizens and elites [10, p. 48].

Accordingly, the development of geopolitical and economic potential is accompanied by numerous risks and threats. The main spatial and geographical factors include the significant length of the external borders of the EAEU and CIS countries, the influence of foreign policy actors [5, p. 174]. The latter are reflected in the dynamics of changes in the indicators: media communications, freedom of movement and foreign policy relations and connections.

Of particular interest are the data on "NPO communications", which have a steady upward trend. The diversity of NPOs operating in various areas testifies to the active development of the third sector of the economy – non-profit organizations. Their peculiarity lies both in their important socio-economic significance and in their profound political and geopolitical transformational changes. For example, the NPO "United States Agency for International Development" (USAID), the National Endowment for Democracy and its branches, the Soros Foundations, the Eurasia Foundation, etc., managed by "the bodies of the collective West", are the direct "directors of color revolutions" [14, p. 207].

Taking into account the average number of employees of one NPO of 30 people [15, p. 19], the total number of people involved in work in the post-Soviet space can be estimated at 4.8 million people. The specified scale of employment of the population (in primary or additional workload) is a significant factor in the socio-economic development of the population of the countries. On the other hand, it represents a real potential for the "education" of agents of foreign influence, which can manifest itself as an opposition force to the current government.

In achieving these goals, mass political communications, represented by media communications, have a significant impact, which in the modern information space have acquired new forms and instruments of interaction between political actors and their influence on the "agenda" with the active imposition of the "necessary" opinion, views on the behavior of the mass audience [6, p. 188].

The trends in the development of friendliness of communication regimes in the post-Soviet space have caused an objective need to develop fundamental international acts of the Russian Federation: the Concept of the Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 09/05/2022 No. 611) and the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 03/31/2023 No. 229). The main focus of the adopted documents is an updated system of views on the humanitarian and foreign policy of the country, aimed at enhancing geopolitical and cultural-humanitarian cooperation in the world.

**Conclusion.** The Greater Caspian area forms a new Eurasian geopolitical and cultural-humanitarian space based on the conjugation of the Chinese mega-project "One Belt - One Road" and the Russian initiative of the Greater Eurasian Partnership as a new architecture of international security and multipolar civilizational development.

The consolidating core of this process is formed by the Caspian states and the CIS countries, which, in cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, extend their area of influence to neighboring states. As a result, the consolidated effects on the processes of strengthening multilateral international cooperation and developing modern communication relations increase.

The key positive factor stimulating the development of the Greater Caspian and Central Asian countries is the peaceful foreign policy of Russia and China, aimed at deepening economic cooperation in the new multipolar world. Ensuring internal unity, multi-level interaction and cooperation of the countries of the region will be achieved through joint efforts within the framework of the coordinated policies of the SCO and BRICS states.

The updated foreign policy doctrine of the Russian Federation is aimed at activating and reformatting the geopolitical and socio-economic strategic initiative to strengthen and further develop interstate relations in the post-Soviet space. A special place in this concept is given to improving the system of views on the processes of international cultural and humanitarian cooperation, including in the field of youth policy.

The state of the main elements of the political communications profile indicates the strengthening of international ties in the sphere of educational and scientific communications, communications in the field of NPO. According to individual parameters and countries, economic and cultural communications tend to decrease previously achieved cooperation ties.

Foreign policy actors continue to exert a noticeable influence on the quality of communication relations, under whose influence the process of politicization of history and the formation of new ruling national elites is taking place. Accordingly, the realities of the modern world determine the need for global transformational changes and priorities for the strategic development of the Russian Federation in both political and socio-economic and international cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

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