

REVIEW ON SHOUSHAN KYUREGHYAN'S PAPER "REGIONAL SECURITY DYNAMICS: RUSSIAN FEDERATION"⁹

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Let me express my gratitude to the organizers to be here, to be in Yerevan once again. That is really a pleasure for me. Now, let me pass to the paper on the Russian Regional Security Dynamics. Shushan Kyureghyan's work focuses attention on Russia's national security and foreign policy, that is to say, Russia's main and long-term national security politics in the "Near" and "Far" abroad. Well, in fact this definition of "Near Abroad" was some kind of 1990s and now it is politely cut out from the official documents. Anyway, the author is quite right in this term, that there are different policies towards Western countries, different rising powers, existing powers and states under power transformation. The author is interested in why this politics unfolds as it does and why it is reasonable to "define the countries of the world as "near" and "far" abroad" (p.1-2), and provides a process-oriented, theoretically/explanatory framework that considers the sources of Russia's concerns, including long-term threats, NATO's eastern enlargement, militarization of the regions adjacent to Russia. The introduction is well written and outlines the theses of the paper.

The author considers different phases of the Russian policy processes: the sources of long-term security problems, why some problems emerge on the Russian security agenda and others not, RF's success in creating intergovernmental institutions to address regional security problems, and how the effectiveness of regional cooperation institutions might be evaluated.

⁹ The text is the transcription of the speech given at the conference.

The titles of different parts of the paper consider the long-term threats, NATO's eastern enlargement, and militarization of the regions adjacent to Russia, increase of EU interest towards USSR ex-member countries, old structures/organizations, and new opportunities for the Russia's foreign policy towards those states in transition. The final part of the paper considers the future of Russia's foreign policy and Russia's vision of national security including a discussion on current debates related to conflict resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh, the erosion of state sovereignty in the light of the recent developments in Syria.

Kyureghyan writes, "The idea of an outward enemy, a Western military threat, is even profitable for the Russian authorities to justify their economic hardship and internal instability" (p. 8). This is the primary strength of the paper - dazzling array of the Russian security and foreign policy doctrines and documents are surveyed, organized, and summarized, allowing them to speak to the various aspects of the explanatory framework. At the outset, the author also makes clear that the paper seeks to describe or explain the many security challenges and threats facing Russia and the wide range of policy efforts trying to address them. So there are "new" and "old" intergovernmental organizations and politics among states in the South Caucasus, and of course, giving attention to actors such as EU and USA, and traditional regional powers Turkey and Iran. The author writes that "by its presence in the Middle East, Russia ensures the neutralization of its competitors such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, that they have their own interests towards European market". She then proceeds to differentiate between deterministic and probabilistic causality, and discusses how causal claims may be based on correlations, counterfactuals, and process tracing, concluding that, "Russia uses the Syrian war for both advertising and testing its own weapons thus showing its power to the world. So, Russia is guided by common geopolitical and cooperative interests of two countries while providing weapons and ammunition to Syria".

It might also be pointed out that the geopolitical interests, foreign-policy approach of the paper translates into a rather detached treatment of

divergent regional perspectives on the South Caucasus security environment. To demonstrate how these factors interact, Kyureghyan examines contentious politics in the region and how “the interests of the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Iran also collide in the South Caucasus” (p.11). In reference to perspectives, the author writes that “Russia will continue its’ policy of expansionism by trying to fill the vacuums both in the Near and Far Abroad, in order to prevent them to be filled by other countries or forces. Russia will continue its’ policy of Western resistance, which will be highly disturbed by its’ economic situation, low oil prices, internal social situation” (p.14). More specifically, the author seeks to understand the type and degree of influence of Russia’s future foreign policy. Kyureghyan concludes that “Russia will remain open but cautious for dialogues with both regional and global powers to overcome the regional challenges and ensure global security and stability” (p.14).

So, in general, the author holds a positive view of Russia politics as an advocate for political and diplomatic settlement of Nagorno Karabakh Conflict. However, the author concludes, “Russia's foreign policy in the South Caucasus should aim to work thoroughly with their societies and applying soft power in those countries” (p.15). This conclusion about the soft power of Russia is very important, so maybe more prospective trying to compare it with “hard” power approach as it was previously. But the most interesting part of the paper contains the conclusion and some future scenarios to help policy makers to deal with the dynamics of national and regional security. Thank You.