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Constructive competition or destructive conflict in the Caspian Sea region?

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Propositions accompanying the thesis

Constructive Competition or Destructive Conflict in the Caspian Sea Region?

1. Since 1990 the Caspian Sea region has hitherto largely been investigated from a New Great Game perspective that depicts the region as a geopolitical battleground between regional and external great powers because of its rich natural resources, strategic location, environmental issues and the legal disagreement.
2. This literature barely studies the Caspian Sea per se. The relevant works view the sea merely as a separating entity between the Caucasus and Central Asia rather than as a bridge that unifies the littoral states.
3. Selective and critical synthesis of classical functionalism and social constructivism can serve as a valuable guide to theorize and strategize technical cooperation, the role of multiple actors and regional integration in the Caspian Sea region.
4. This synthesis establishes a critical and innovative theoretical tool box as well as new areas for empirical investigation, which does not exist for realists and is overlooked by liberals.
5. The shared environmental problems are one of the starting points for the current cooperation in the Caspian Sea. They have helped create suitable conditions for finding mutually beneficial interests among the littoral governments.
6. The development of cooperation habits, which was started in the Caspian Environmental Program, continued and reinforced through the Legal Status Convention, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) pipelines.
7. The BTC and the SGC projects have influenced and changed political and economic value of the regional conflicts as it has introduced new economic and political restrictions. Due to their economic, political and technical costs, the projects have made the regional conflicts less beneficial and ultimately less feasible.
8. The Caspian Sea region is no longer the exclusive playground of states, either those in the region or external powers, but that inter-governmental and non-governmental actors have also started playing significant roles in the different fields of cooperation.
9. The three case studies showed that BP, the UNEP, the UNDP, the EBRD, the GEF, the AIIB, and the World Bank are the main players in the Caspian Sea region who offer technical, political, economic, social, and security assistance. They frame issues, help set agendas, and mobilize financial support.

10. Functionalism is mainly in service of ruling elites in the Caspian Sea region. In contrast to Western Europe, the Caspian littoral states do not aim for integration per se, because the littoral states view integration loss of their freedom of decision-making. They rather aim for functional cooperation because cooperation means working together for shared issues without losing autonomy.