

Thesis abstract: Geopolitical Rivalry in Central Asia and Turkmenistan's power as a weak state
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Abstract

Research on weak states and their position in the international system has been a widely discussed topic for decades, especially in relation to the Cold War bipolar system that revolved around Russia and the United States as great powers. Yet what is lacking is a contemporary analysis that concentrates on the current multipolar system in which the importance of economic alliances and power surpass military power, and how this affects weak states' foreign policy behavior and trade opportunities. This research therefore offers an empirical analysis on great power geopolitical competition between Russia and China over Turkmenistan's economic allegiance, specifically regarding its natural gas export, and seeks to explain how this geopolitical competition has affected Turkmenistan's foreign energy policy behavior as a weak state vis-à-vis these great powers. Additionally, this research seeks to examine how Turkmenistan has even instrumentalized this competition to further its national interest of energy export diversification. More specifically, this research shows that great power competition has played a considerable role in the formation and successfulness of Turkmenistan's foreign energy policy between 1991 and 2006.