THE RENAISSANCE OF THE RUSSIAN EDUCATION STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract

In the last few years Russia has progressively accentuated the need to grow human capital. This area of economic transformation is viewed as one of the most promising ways to accelerate innovation processes and increase labour productivity. Thus, Russia has increased its contribution to the Middle East countries by focusing support in education which could produce a much bigger effect compared with other support instruments. One of the tools for prioritizing the development of human capital in cooperation with the Middle East is the creation of a ramified network of education alliances. This article will examine the strategy that Russia is using to promote its education in the Middle East which includes bilateral education alliances, regional education initiatives on establishing joint centres of technical and educational development. The paper’s conclusion is that Russia’s educational strategy today would provide a long-term positive effect on economic and political relations between countries for generations.

Keywords: Renaissance, Education Strategy.

1 INTRODUCTION

The outcomes from the Russian presence in the Middle East validate that the U.S is being outplayed in the region. As Stephen Blank argues, Russia’s foreign policy in the Middle East was, firstly uttered by former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, and to feature both innovation and continuity. Primakov expressed the rudimentary knowledgeable outline and menace valuation used by Moscow to measure the Near East currently. Primakov and his descendants, Vladimir Putin, reinstated the neo-Soviet and anti-American viewpoint in Russia’s complete national security policy by probing the Middle East in using a collection of tactics and strategies with such achievement that the prototype is being extended separate of the region. Tactics concerning arms sales, finance, minorities, education and energy are all foundational keys to Russia that were formerly shut. Moscow’s policy development in the region obviously indicates the continuing Soviet-like if not Tsarist worldview that energies Moscow’s foreign policy. Vladimir Putin’s binary official visit to the Gulf countries in 2007 assured Russia’s location in the region now and was a masterstroke as described by Theodore Karasik. With Russia’s present domination over the Syrian prospect, Moscow’s policy allows it to profounder contact with the region and eventually Africa. This poses a great challenge to America regional hegemony.

As Blank points out, Russia’s deep-seated option to co-optation diplomacies in all of its appearances is not different. Somewhat, Moscow’s call to arms sales at national and international level is part of the larger push by the Kremlin to enlarge Russian power. Certainly, it is a command to an everlasting state of war, even if it may take a non-kinetic informational feature slightly than a purely military feature. Nonetheless in either case, this command to continuous war by Russia against Western interests in the region is a landmine under the present international order. Additionally, it is a landmine under the continuousness of the very Russian state Putin pursues to reserve and spread. Intrinsically, the main matter of sustainability of Russia’s thrust into the region becomes overriding (Popescu & Secriér, 2018).

In order to understand the Russian come back to the Middle East, this paper will examine the Russian power projection from educational and media prospective through the examination of the literature of scholars and experts in the field of Russian foreign policies and MENA region. Later, the paper will examine how the Russian tactics are challenging the American cultural hegemony in that region and how it's affecting the Middle East. In the scope of this paper, cultural hegemony will be limited to media and education hegemony exercised by superpowers to dominate on a certain nation or area. It should be noted that to examine education hegemony, this paper must examine other aspects of cultural hegemony due to intersection between all aspects. In other words, education cannot be examined without examining the influence of a certain foreign language on the population, or can be
examined without scrutinizing the influence of media (films, books, and etc..) to notice the education mechanism.

2 RUSSIA’S MEDIA AND EDUCATION STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Donald Jensen contends that the plan of Russian power into the region in current years has been escorted by an imposing Russian info feud exertion envisioned to advance Russia’s foreign policy goals. The media strategy is a vital instrument in Moscow’s resource. This crusade was been slightly fruitful across the Middle East, particularly in Syria. However the efficiency of that exertion is diluted by numerous issues (BOFIT, 2018).

First, state censorship in the region is much more predominant than in more open media parts like in Eastern Europe, where we have seen Russian disinformation promotions be operative. This datum allows national governments to block Russian signalling that they are in conflict with. Second, Moscow overall obtains a diverse basket of common admiration and condemnation. Examination by Pew states that 35 percent of those balloted in the region see Moscow as a menace; yet 35 percent have an auspicious view of the Kremlin. These results, furthermore, have been reliable over the past few years. Third, there are little cultural, historical, linguistic or other connections between Moscow and the peoples of the Arab world. There are no ethnic-Russian societies adequately huge to be mobilized by Russian information actions. Lastly, Russia is geographically distant from the Middle East, making its signal firmer to withstand (Al-Makahleh, 2017).

Contrariwise, The Kremlin can be estimated to push more sweets on improving Moscow’s media existence and reinforce its power over education, culture, and art, with the purpose of familiarize the citizens of the Middle East with Russian culture and values. Conventionally more traditional than the secular and liberal West, Moscow has many more in common with the region’s habits of life. Both the Middle East and Russia can acquire inordinate profits from improving their cultural connections in the impending years, even with challenging US hegemony. This development is currently partial and might thrust American cultural icons out of the Middle East in the future (Baev, 2017).

For the White House, Moscow uses its info war skills as a strategy, especially its Sputnik and RT Arabic news agencies, to push its foreign policy objectives in the region. Those foreign policy objectives comprise of becoming a super power in the Middle East, plummeting the American influence, bolster partners such as Syria, and fighting terrorism. Indication proposes that while Moscow’s media accounts are dispersed sketchily in the Middle East by traditional means and online, outside of Syria their influence has been restricted. The aptitude of local authoritarian governments to control the info their communities obtain, cross cutting political weights, the absence of ancient ethnic and cultural ties with Moscow, and extensive uncertainties about Moscow’s intents will make it problematic for Russia to use info campaigns as an actual instrument if it choose to uphold an improved sustainable existence in the Middle East (Barmin, 2018).

It can be concluded that Russia’s image in the Middle East can be a mixture of contrasts and similarities. On one hand, Russia’s culture with the region is not strong enough to exercise any influence, nevertheless, Russians are considered more similar with the Arab region than of westerners. Nevertheless, Moscow is not able to penetrate the social culture of the Middle East due to American overwhelming cultural domination through films media, language and education, and to feebleness in the Russian propaganda machine. For instance, Russia has no schools or universities presence in the Middle East; except for limited cultural centres that teach the Russian language and culture. While on the American sides, they have established some of the well reputable universities in the region since the 19th century such as the American University of Beirut (AUB), and the American University of Cairo (AUC). The next section will discuss in deeply this clash of two cultures.

3 THE CLASH OF THE RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN CULTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Kremlin determinations in the Middle East are hostile to American interests and provision powers like Iran, which are also aggressive to U.S interests that probably will be extended in the near future. Increasing the support with those with long-standing practice in both Russia and the region will therefore be vital to safeguard that key policymakers and stakeholders completely grip the main forecasts of the developing Russian-Middle Eastern partnership (McGill Peterson, 2014).
One of the core dissimilarities between Russian and American educational structures is that in the latter, the specialization starts only in high educational institution; whereas in Russian and the Soviet Union the specialization began in high school. Another indicator is that most of research universities in the US are sponsored by the private sector of economy: the greatest influential international organizations invest in prominent educational institutions thus that in the future they will get qualified and knowledgeable professionals. The significant plus of the American system is that it continually attempts to trail all technological and social variations. In addition, most of the American schools and universities promote critical thinking than to receive the information from the instructor, which this is absent in the Russian education systems. Therefore, when it comes to education influence, the Middle Eastern population can find it easier to adopt the American system, although it’s foreign to them, than to follow the Russian system which is similar to the old Middle Eastern education system. In addition, the modern Russian education system does not prioritize critical thinking because it’s main ideological motivation is to improve the country’s military capabilities due to the geopolitical location of the country.

Creating the outlines of a fit understanding approach to forestall Moscow’s moves will entail additional exploratory and addressing the enduring matters nearby the developing connection of Russia’s Muslim population and the Islamic MENA including as this connexion narrates to the forthcoming of ties that muddle the South and the North (Blank, 2017).

More prominently, the American government requires a diverse set of tools to measure Moscow’s upcoming domination in the region. This contains more actual resources to distinguish the main alterations in Russia’s definite influence plan against optics of power. A main matter is in comprehending how Moscow and the Middle East see their partnership assimilation in new and compound conducts, counting what encounters this may stance for the U.S (Jones, 2011).

3.1 A New Academic Tactic to Comprehending the New Geopolitics of Moscow’s Actions in the Middle East

The dolefully insufficient comprehending of Moscow’s goals and tactics in the region has been perceived by many scholars thru the period of the development. The growing foreign policy personals currently working in government or studying at educational organizations are getting the incorrect information when it comes to comprehending the intricate problems of Moscow’s plan to the region. What is absent is widespread ground effort in both Russian and Middle Eastern field studies via educational and or academic exchange programs. In other words, it is the fall of the American educational institutions to sustain with the stresses of the geopolitical setting. Regional Studies is progressively deserted by universities, while reducing Russian programs are damaging the US competences to comprehend and anticipate the Russian strategy. A thoughtful ingenuity like or similar to a Blue Ribbon Panel may be essential to merge not only the castigations of Moscow and Middle East matters, nevertheless also Moscow and African countries, and Russia and Latin America. The need to blend regional studies castigations to make a new strain of specialists that are cross-cultural is of supreme standing in order to not only see what Moscow is doing and going to do but also to concurrently be able to comprehend and completely appreciate the Middle East perspective (Karasik, 2018).

Also, America needs severe, painstaking comprehending of the actors in the drama; thus, the launch of a fusion cell that combines Moscow and the region experts is yonder acute at this stage. Nevertheless, this problem is presently barred by the stove-piping predominant within most American government organizations. Misperception controls paramount due to the lack of comprehending of the details of Russian tactics and strategies, added by the wide absence of consciousness of the region’s many shades. During this development, the level of interrogative from American government specialists exemplified that the Kremlin specialists do not comprehend the region and their analysts do not understand Moscow. Office staffs that are accountable for the region countries are uninformed or too hardly absorbed by their country; and thus, they are losing the additional regional affairs conducted by Moscow (Çelikpala, 2017).

4 CONCLUSIONS

Going back to the Arabic world, Moscow is here to stay; obliging Russia out of the Middle East is extremely doubtful. Even though national difficulties in Russia may to some aspects divert Moscow from its additional regional goals, Moscow’s relentless push south is now ubiquitous and augmented by the geopolitical and geo-economics evolution happening in the region. Likewise, the United States
will only be able to challenge with Moscow’s advances in this important region and beyond by comprehending the main factors and drivers eluding Western scholars at the current stage.

It should also be noted that the educational factor is considered the main key to open the Middle East into new opportunity from the American or the Russian sides. Education was the first step the American took in the 19th century in the Middle East to establish their hegemony. Nevertheless, currently, the US does not give enough attention into studying the region and is more interested in spreading its culture only. In addition, Russia has also failed in understanding the nature of the Middle East and hence, might find difficulties and probably crashes with the local governments. Moreover, if Russia seeks to establish an educational domination in the Middle East, hence language and media influence, it has to start with fortifying its own underdeveloped education system which seems that it’s following an American styled system such as IELTS exams; nevertheless, never develop the essence of the American education ideology, which is critical thinking. It’s true that the USSR and Russia have produced many brilliant scientists in the field of natural sciences, yet failed to produce any significant social scientists. Hence, derive the failure of Russian education to influence any other nation.

Reasons for this underdevelopment go to the Russian mentality and its geopolitics. Russia’s location hinders it in a defensive position which seeks to control the content of its educational ideology rather than provide the population with free thinking. Most of the Middle Eastern students attend Russian universities in the field of natural sciences and not social sciences and it is mostly due to financial liabilities. In conclusion, it seems hard for Russia to impact the Middle East educationally since its strategy is not efficient in replacing the American educational system.

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