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## TEHRAN AND MOSCOW MISSTEPS EXPOSE CASPIAN REGION FAULTLINES

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Robert M. Cutler

Structural shifts emerge from the waning deterrent power of old hegemons and the emergence of a new regional assertiveness.

Both Iran and Russia are attempting to assert influence in the Caspian Sea region, but their recent miscalculations are provoking visible resistance.

Most recently, Azerbaijan's sharp responses to Tehran's accusations about hosting Israeli drones and to Moscow's deadly police raid on Azerbaijani nationals in Yekaterinburg (followed by Baku's cancellation of a Russian foreign ministry officials visit) highlight that not only Azerbaijan but the entire Caspian Sea region, including Central Asia, is increasingly unwilling to play the role of passive buffer.

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