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Power rivalry in the post-Soviet space in political and military domain

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POWER RIVALRY IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE IN POLITICAL AND MILITARY DOMAIN

ABSTRACT

Since the mid-90s the Russian Federation has remained the most important player in the CIS region. It has the greatest potential of instruments which can be used towards the post-Soviet states in political and military domain to maintain and maybe even broaden its influence in its former colonies. It seems that Iran has the least potential to employ. Its situation is the most complex one because of Western and Turkish concerns not only about fundamentalism export to the Muslim post-Soviet countries but also the disturbing issues not directly connected with the CIS region – Iranian nuclear program, its backing for terrorist organization in the Middle East, its anti-Israeli position and Teheran engagement in the Syrian conflict.

Key words

post-Soviet space, rivalry, Russian Federation, Western

1. Introduction

Rivalry is a situation we may observe in everyday life and we may read about in thousands of books. It occurs during our childhood and adult life, in families, work and in the public life. The competition is also characteristic of the animal world. It was and still remains a very important part of the international relations in every part of the world. The post-Soviet space is not the exception.

The aim of this article is to analyze the rivalry between six powers: Russia, the U.S., China, Turkey, Iran and the European Union in political and military domains. It again emerged in Eurasia after the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. The author is aware that rivalry in that region occurs also in others spheres like economic or cultural, but editorial limitations do not allow discuss all the problems connected with rivalry in the region mentioned above.

Some of the powers engaged in the rivalry like Russia, Turkey, Iran (less China) and some of the European countries have been involved in that area for centuries. Some, like the United States is a new player in rivalry in the CIS region.¹ The European Union as an organization, and a new kind of international actor may be qualified as a qualitatively new player in the discussed region. Therefore it may be said that the post-Soviet area is a place where regional powers locate their interests. In the region there is also involved one global power – the U.S. The latter, China, Russia and two of the EU members – France and Great Britain are also formal powers i.e. permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

It is worth noting, that after 1991 the new independent countries have become engaged in the rivalry between one another. The good example of that is the relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

2. Concept of rivalry

The word *rivalry* is of Latin origin (*rivus*) and it refers to the situation in which two people living on the same stream (*rivus*) were both using the water from that river.² In Polish dictionaries we may find a definition according to which rivalry is a kind of competition, applying for something or someone at the same time.³ In *The International Relations Dictionary* special attention is paid to the national interests contradiction which may result in rivalry.⁴

In the English literature the concepts of *rivalry* and *competition* are often used as synonyms. There is however a group of authors for whom it is not the same. John A. Vasquez is a representative of that group. According to him,

¹ The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is an organization created in December 1991. Until 2009 there were twelve member countries, which became independent after the collapse of the USSR: except Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. After the war in August 2008 Georgia decided to withdraw from the CIS.

² J. Sondel, *Słownik łacińsko-polski dla prawników i historyków* [Latin-Polish Dictionary for Lawyers and Historians], Kraków 1997, p. 847.

³ *Uniwersalny Słownik Języka Polskiego* [Universal Dictionary of the Polish Language], Warszawa 2006, p. 1107; See: *Słownik Języka Polskiego* [Polish Language Dictionary], Vol. 7, Warszawa 1965, p. 1449.

⁴ J.C. Plano, R. Olton, *The International Relations Dictionary*, Santa Barbara–Oxford 1982, p. 9.

competition is an engine of *rivalry*. The latter as an effect of political interactions creates a significant level of tension, sometimes even enmity.⁵

Many authors suggests that almost every country is somehow involved in competition, although not all competition may be qualified as rivalry. If we want to do so, except the national interests contradiction, which was mentioned above, we should be able to indicate the mutual identification as rivals by the countries the relation of which we are analyzing. According to William R. Thompson branding as a rival, the psychological factor is essential for recognition a relation between the countries as rivalry.⁶

There is a need to add that firstly, not every conflict should be categorized as rivalry and secondly, not in every rivalry the use of a military force occurs. Furthermore, rivalry may prove to be the cause of a military conflict, nevertheless it is not necessarily the reason.

3. Main causes of rivalry in the post-Soviet space

There are several reasons why powers are interested in CIS region.

Firstly, historical ties play a significant role for some of them. It applies particularly to Russia, Turkey and Iran, but also to some of the EU members. In the past, all off those countries played important role in the whole or in one of sub-regions of the present post-Soviet space. For example as it was the past, Turkey and Iran concentrate on the Central Asia and the Caucasus. In the past Russia, Turkey, Iran and some of the European countries were engaged in several wars over the territory of contemporary post-Soviet countries.

Secondly, in some cases historical ties have led to strengthening the cultural, linguistic and religious associations. Most of the Central Asian nations are for instance ethnically and religiously (Sunni Muslims) related to Turks, only Tajiks, although they are Sunni Muslims (as Turks), belong to the Persian ethnic group.⁷ Also for some countries a more than fifty-year coexistence in one multiethnic state – the Russian Empire and later the USSR has created strong ties of different kinds. Just to mention, there still is a possibility to communicate in Russian on

⁵ J.A. Vasquez, *Distinguishing Rivals that Go to War from Those that Do Not: A Quantitative Comparative Case Study of The Two Paths to War*, “International Studies Quarterly” 1996, No. 4, Vol. 40, p. 532.

⁶ W.R. Thompson, *Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics*, “International Studies Quarterly” 2000, Vol. 45, p. 568.

⁷ Iranians generally are Shiites.

the whole post-Soviet space, and in almost every country of the region there is a substantial number of Orthodox believers.

Thirdly, the location of the post-Soviet space between the East and the West, close to Europe, Asia and the Middle East makes it crucial in international relations. Since 2001 and the operation in Afghanistan the importance, especially of the South Caucasus and even more the Central Asia, has grown. There were opened two American military bases in Uzbek Khanbad (closed in 2005) and in Kyrgyz Manas. Through the post-Soviet territories (Baltic States, Russia, Caspian ports, Central Asia) also runs the Northern Distribution Network – NDN. It helps transport supplies for the Afghan operation,⁸ after the closure (in autumn 2011) of the southern route via Pakistan.⁹ In 2014 it is going to be used for troops and equipment transportation after the end of the Afghan mission.

A lot of trade routes run throughout the whole of the region, together with very important pipelines conveying gas and oil from Russia but also from other Caspian countries to the rest of the world. At the same time via the post-Soviet region drug routes lead from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe. Turkey, Iran, China and the United States are also the destination of Afghan opium.

Finally, the instability in the CIS region makes all of the listed powers interested in stabilizing the situation. Since the 90s lack of stability has been caused first of all by conflicts and separatisms in Transdnistria (Moldova), Abkhazia, South Ossetia (Georgia) and Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan). It is also a consequence of the civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997) and long-lasting conflicts in the neighboring Afghanistan. Another dangerous region in the post-Soviet area is located in Ferghana Valley (in Central Asia, spread across eastern Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). The valley became a place where the Islamic fundamentalists organization like Hizb ut-Tahrir, The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or The Islamic Jihad Union, which are considered as terrorist organizations by some countries e.g. the U.S., have their headquarters. There are indications that some of these groups cooperate with Al-Qaida and others terrorists organizations in Europe and outside.

⁸ A.C. Kuchins, T. Sanderson, *Central Asia's Northern Exposure*, "New York Times", 04.08.2009; A.C. Kuchins, T.M. Sanderson, *The Northern Distribution Network and Afghanistan Geopolitical Challenges and Opportunities*, http://csis.org/files/publication/091229_Kuchins_NDNandAfghan_Web.pdf [access: 01.12.2012].

⁹ In June 2012 the route was reopened.

4. Main powers interests in the post-Soviet area sub-regions

It may be considered, that except the United States and the Russian Federation, most of the powers involved in the post-Soviet space concentrate on certain sub-regions. Russian interests as the strongest country in the CIS and the “ex-owner” of the area, and American as the global power, are located throughout the post-Soviet space. There is a different situation with the European Union. Its activity is focused especially on eastern neighborhood (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia).

The key post-Soviet sub-regions for Turkey’s foreign policy oriented in the discussed space are the South Caucasus and the Central Asia. Azerbaijan and Georgia are the most important partners in the Caucasus, because they participate in gas and oil transport routs to Europe. Relations with Yerevan are cold mainly because of the mass murder executed by Ottoman Empire over Armenians in 1915 and its engagement in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict against close Turkish partner – Azerbaijan. As it was earlier stated, ethnic closeness (except Tajikistan) is a factor conditioning the directions of Ankara policy in Central Asia. For Turkey Ukraine is also a vital partner. Kiev like Ankara remains a member of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.¹⁰

Iranian activity concentrates especially in countries of northern neighborhood: Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Relations with Uzbekistan are correct but rather tense.¹¹ Christian Armenia is also an important partner of Iran, which affects the Iranian-Azerbaijani relations. It seems that good relations between Iran and Armenia are a consequence of pragmatism in foreign policy of Teheran. The latter has been trying to maintain good relations with Russia who is a close partner and an ally of Yerevan. In the foreign policy of both countries we may also find common goals, first of all the limitation of the U.S. presence in the post-Soviet space.

In the centre of Chinese interests in the CIS area are the Central Asian states. It is the result of geographical proximity, natural resources and the unstable situation in Xinjiang province which is close to the Central Asian countries and

¹⁰ Post-Soviet member countries in the Organization of BSEC: Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova.

¹¹ A. Bryc, *Polityka Iranu na obszarze Wspólnoty Niepodległych Państw* [Iran’s Policy in the Commonwealth of Independent States] [in:] *Polityka zagraniczna i bezpieczeństwa na obszarze Wspólnoty Niepodległych Państw* [Foreign and Security Policy in the Commonwealth of Independent States], A. Legucka, K. Malak (eds.), Warszawa 2008, p. 97.

which is inhabited by Muslim Uyghur people ethnically and religiously related to the Central Asian nations. PRC is also more and more involved in other sub-regions of the post-Soviet space – in the South Caucasus and the Eastern Europe.

5. Crucial political and military instruments used by powers in the rivalry in the post-Soviet space

All powers engaged in the rivalry in the post-Soviet space since the 1991 have been using international organizations to strengthen their ability to influence the new independent states.

The key organizations used by Moscow to secure its presence and control in and over its “near abroad” are: the Commonwealth of Independent States,¹² the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)¹³ and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).¹⁴ The EurAsian Economic Community (EurAsEc),¹⁵ the Common Economical Space¹⁶ and the future Eurasian Union are also an important institutions for Russia. The Western countries (the U.S. and the EU) rely especially on NATO and the European Union to build its presence and influence in the region. The cooperation between NATO and the new independent states was initiated in the 90s, at first within the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (it was renamed in 1997 as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) and the Partnership for Peace Programme. Most of the agreements between the EU and the post-Soviet countries (Partnership and Cooperation Agreements¹⁷) were also signed in the 90s.

¹² Commonwealth of Independent States, <http://www.cisstat.com/index.html> [access: 01.12.2012].

¹³ Present member countries of the CSTO: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan. More about CSTO see: <http://www.odkb.gov.ru/b/a.htm> [access: 01.12.2012].

¹⁴ Members of the SCO: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. See: Shanghai Cooperation Organization, <http://www.sectsc.org/EN/> [access: 01.12.2012].

¹⁵ Member countries of the EurAsEc: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia are observers of EurAsEC. See: http://www.eurasian-ec.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=7 [access: 01.12.2012].

¹⁶ Member countries: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia.

¹⁷ See: *Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs): Russia, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia*, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_

After the EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 the importance of the post-Soviet countries, especially those which are close to its eastern borders, has grown. It has speeded up the creation and inauguration of European Eastern Policy. In 2009 after the presentation of Polish–Swedish initiative the new project toward eastern neighbors – Eastern Partnership was launched. It is targeted at: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.¹⁸ In order to broaden its influence, promote its political and economical models the U.S. as well as the EU have been trying to create organizations under its custody and without Russian participation (the main rival in the post-Soviet space). Such a motivation might be the cause of creation in 1997 the GU(U)AM¹⁹ and in 2005 an informal forum – the Community of Democratic Choice.

The SCO remains the only organization in which China has a possibility to have institutionalized presence in the post-Soviet sub-region, of primary importance to Beijing, in Central Asia.²⁰ Through the SCO, China may also put a pressure on the member Central Asian countries regarding its support for the separatism movement of the Uyghurs from Xinjiang. Furthermore, for PCR the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a kind of a test in participation in a multilateral structure in which it gaining dominant position.²¹ The SCO, as well as China and Russia, supports the idea of multipolar world order²² and is opposed to the interference in the internal affairs of states on the pretext of human rights.²³

relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17002_en.htm [access: 01.12.2012].

¹⁸ See: *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Eastern Partnership {SEC(2008) 2974}*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0823:FIN:EN:PDF> [access: 01.12.2012].

¹⁹ GU(U)AM is an acronym of first letters of the name of member countries: Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (1999–2005), Azerbaijan and Moldova. In May 2006 the GUAM became an international intergovernmental organization named GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development.

²⁰ J. Doyon, *Strengthening the SCO. The New Great Game in Central Asia*, “China Analysis” 2011, September, p. 4.

²¹ P. Ferdinand, *Sino-Russian Relations: An Analytical Overview* [in:] *Russia-China Relations*, A. Moshes, M. Nojonen (eds.), Report 30, 2011, p. 26.

²² See: *Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order*, <http://www.fas.org/news/russia/1997/a52--153en.htm> [access: 01.12.2012].

²³ K. Wańczyk, *Polityka Federacji Rosyjskiej wobec Regionu Morza Kaspijskiego w latach 1999–2004* [Russian Policy towards the Caspian Sea Region, 1999–2004], Toruń 2007, p. 57.

Since the collapse of the USSR Turkey and Iran have supported membership of the post-Soviet Muslims states in international Islamic structures like the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) or the Organization of Islamic Conference (since June 2011 Organization of Islamic Cooperation). At present, six of the post-Soviet countries are members of the latter: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.²⁴ The same countries also are members of ECO. Iran has constantly been supporting the post-Soviet countries membership in the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM). Nowadays the following CIS states participate in the NAM: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan (members), Armenia and Tajikistan (observers).

During the 90s the Republic of Turkey was striving to create an organization grouping Black Sea states. In June 1992, under the Istanbul Declaration, eleven countries, among them six post-Soviet (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, but also Russia) created an informal forum – Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Six years later the Organization of BSEC was formed. Membership in the organizations mentioned above gives Ankara not only more options to influence these countries in general, but also in case of ongoing conflicts between some of the states. It should be added, that Turkey, especially during the 90s, was a kind of intermediary between the post-Soviet states and western organizations like the Council of Europe, the World Bank or OECD. It was also Ankara's initiative to create the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRSKOY) in 1993. Among its members are: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Gagauzia (Moldova) and the Turkic autonomous republics in Russia. In October 2009 the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States was also established including: Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.²⁵

One of Turkey's major project initiated in 2008 was the Caucasus Stabilization and Cooperation Platform targeted of the Caucasus countries. The project was presented as an effect of the conflict between Russia and Georgia in August. The Platform was going to be the means of the unstable Caucasus normalization by countries from the region in 3+2 formula (South Caucasus countries: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and regional powers: Russia and Turkey). It was going to be as well a way of strengthening Ankara's position in the South Caucasus

²⁴ Organization of Islamic Conference, <http://www.oic-oci.org> [access: 01.12.2012].

²⁵ The Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, <http://turkkon.org/eng/icerik.php?no=31> [access: 01.12.2012].

and its role of mediation over regional conflicts.²⁶ The project has never been put into effect.

All sides of the rivalry in the post-Soviet space have been trying to promote its values and political systems. The organizations mentioned above are also instruments to achieve these goals.

Turkey promotes its own concept of a democratic and secular Islamic state (especially in Azerbaijan and the Central Asia), whereas Iran (in the same countries) the Islamic republic model.²⁷ The essence of Chinese model is fast economic development with limited political liberalization. Chinese economic and financial assistance is not as in the case of western support given under e.g. human rights conditions. For the undemocratic countries it is an important advantage. Democracy and the free market principles are promoted by the West. Its own model of democracy since 2005, the so called sovereign democracy, has been promoted by Russia.²⁸

There are instruments which are used only by some of the countries which compete over the post-Soviet space, among them: 1) support for the Central Asian regimes, 2) involvement in mediation around the conflicts, 3) military and technical cooperation.

Firstly, keeping in power pro-Russian regimes (in the Central Asia but also in Belarus) is connected with general goal of Russian policy toward the CIS countries – to maintain the status quo i.e. Russian influence in the sub-region and limiting the danger of spreading western democracy. For Russia as well as for China, Turkey and Western countries it is also important that the secular regimes in the Central Asia and in Azerbaijan are a kind of guarantee that the Islamic fundamentalism, Iranian but also Wahhabi influence will not spread to

²⁶ D. Devrim, E. Schulz, *The Caucasus: Which Role for Turkey in the European Neighborhood?*, "Insight Turkey" 2009, No. 3, Vol. 11, p. 180.

²⁷ V.V. Tsepka, *The Remaking of Eurasia*, "Foreign Affairs" 1998, No 2, Vol. 7, pp. 114–115.

²⁸ See: I. Krastiew, *Suwerenna demokracja* [Sovereign Democracy], "Dziennik Europa" [Daily Europe] 26.08.2006; A. Włodkowska, *Problemy rosyjskiej dominacji na obszarze WNP* [Problems of Russian Domination in the CIS], "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" [Yearbook of the Institute of Central and Eastern Europe] 2008, pp. 80–82. See also: A. Kokoshin, *Real Sovereignty and Sovereign Democracy*, "Russia in Global Affairs" 2006, No 4, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_7338 [access: 01.12.2012]; A. Okara, *Sovereign Democracy: A New Russian Idea or a PR Project?*, "Russia in Global Affairs" 2007, No. 2, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_9123 [access: 01.12.2012].

these states. Moscow also supports the secular Central Asian leaders in their fight against Islamic fundamentalism struggling itself with the problem mainly in the Northern Caucasus. The Northern Caucasian militants cooperate with those from the Central Asian Ferghana Valley.

Secondly, except China all of competing powers have been trying to influence the mediation processes over the post-Soviet conflicts. Russia and the Western countries are currently engaged in all conflicts negotiations whereas Turkey only in negotiations around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In the 90s Iran was involved in mediation around the latter and the civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997). Participation in negotiations creates for the mediators good opportunities to work out solutions consistent with their own interests.

Thirdly, except Iran all the sides of the post-Soviet rivalry also cooperate in the military and technical sphere. As Russia they supply armaments on preference conditions, grant loans on preferential terms for buying munitions or involve the post-Soviet states in military exercises. All of these are meant to bring the CIS countries closer to competing powers.

Only Russia and Western countries have been striving to maintain their military presence in the discussed area. At present Russia has its military bases in Belarus, Transdnistria (Moldova), Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Moscow rents as well bases in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. With the beginning of the Afghan operation (in 2001) the Western countries have provided bases in the Central Asian states – until 2005 in Uzbekistan (Khnabad) and still in Kyrgyzstan (Manas). In 2002 Uzbekistan agreed for the Termez base to be used by 300 German soldiers. It is used also by others NATO members, including the U.S. The United States also use the airport in Navoi.

And finally, only the Russian Federation in August 2008 used military power to secure its sphere of influence. The use of power against Georgia was a confirmation of the statement that Russia is ready to use its military power to secure vital interests. After the South Ossetia and Abkhazia recognition by Moscow, Turkey and most of Western countries (the U.S., Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, Italy and France) criticized this decision. What is important, none of the post-Soviet states have recognized the Georgian separatist provinces. Neither did Iran nor China.

6. Conclusions

Certainly, the powers involved in the post-Soviet space may be defined as rivals. Only relations between the United States and Iran are based on enmity. All the other countries which compete in the CIS area respect the sovereignty of each other.

Due to the scale of interdependence, which is typical for contemporary international relations, we may observe that the powers remaining rivals in one domain have to at the same time cooperate in the other. For example, all of them compete in the economic sphere e.g. they want to secure their access to gas and oil resources and routes of their transportation, nevertheless they decided to cooperate on the Afghan case. The Afghan issue is important (because it is a serious source of danger) for all of the powers mentioned above, however there are areas of cooperation which are in the interest only of some powers. A good example of that is the partnership between China and Russia in curbing the U.S. influence in the post-Soviet space, and especially in Central Asia or in the creation of the multipolar world order. The latter has some impact on the post-Soviet space.

Close cooperation is also observed between the United States and the European Union. In many situations these two actors are supported by Turkey. It is quite natural because of Ankara's membership in NATO and its EU aspirations. Of course it does not mean that Turkey resigns for example from cooperation with Moscow. It does cooperate mainly because of its energetic dependence, but also in order to balance its policy in the post-Soviet space. Turkey is aware that Russia has still been an important player in the CIS region.

The analysis carried out in the article allows to state that all of the powers involved in rivalry in the post-Soviet space use similar methods to maintain or increase their influence on the CIS countries. All of them use:

- international organizations in which they are members or create ones (like GUAM which was created by the West);
- promote their values and political systems.

A number of methods are used only by some of the powers:

- support for the Central Asian regimes (often for different reasons is implemented by all of the powers except Iran);
- involvement in mediations around conflicts (except China and now Iran in the mediations Russia, the U.S., the European Union and Turkey are involved);

- military and technical cooperation (all of the powers, however Iran in the least). It should be stressed that Russia is the only actor who decided to use military power against one of the post-Soviet countries – Georgia (in 2008). It is worth to adding that since 2003 Tbilisi has maintained very close relations with the U.S. one of Russia’s main rivals in the South Caucasus.

Concluding, since the mid 90s the Russian Federation has remained the most important player in the CIS region. It has the greatest potential of instruments which can be used towards the post-Soviet states in political and military domain to maintain and maybe even broaden its influence in its former colonies. It seems that Iran has the least potential to employ. Its situation is the most complex one because of Western and Turkish concerns not only about fundamentalism export to the Muslim post-Soviet countries but also the disturbing issues not directly connected with the CIS region – Iranian nuclear program, its backing for terrorist organization in the Middle East, its anti-Israeli position and Teheran engagement in the Syrian conflict.