PLACE AND ROLE OF TURKEY – RUSSIA – IRAN
TRILATERAL RELATIONS IN THE ENERGY STRATEGY OF AZERBAIJAN

Abstract.

The relations between modern Turkey, Russia and Iran have deep cultural, historical and religious roots, just these roots conditioned geopolitics in Eurasia and Near East. The invasive policy of Ottoman and Russia Empires caused to deepening of competition between them and occurrence of tens of wars along the Black Sea in the XVI – XX centuries. Ottomans supported the political wishes of Turkish and Muslim people residing in the Caucasus and Russia helped the Slavic and Christian minorities in Turkey to oppose the Ottoman dominion. After the World War I, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Vladimir Lenin assisted Atatürk in the Turkish revolutionary movement and the first relations between modern Turkey Republic and USSR had the nature of cooperation. The relations were colder during the cold war years. The claims of the Soviet Union about Black Sea straits were different under the governance of Stalin, following it, Turkey entered into NATO against the Communist expansion and comprised the South wing of the block. In the 1990s, the tension arose between the parties because of the actions of Russia in the Caucasus and "pan-turkist" policy of Ankara held on the area of former Soviet Union, as well as supporting the separator groups struggling against each other. Gradually, the security priorities were come to the fore, Russia directed its attention to the Islamist and separator movements held in the North Caucasus, Turkey tries to prevent the Kurdish terrorism, thus, both parties agreed to cease the support
of the separators. This change became deepened together with the economic and energy relations established in the last years of the USSR, as well as the disappointment of both parties towards West demonstrated itself, afterwards, practical collaboration and historical approach inclinations emerged between Moscow and Ankara within the last decade.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey, energy strategy, policy, South Caucasus

**Azerbaycan Enerji Stratejisinin Yeri ve Rolü - Rusya İran Ticari İlişkileri**


**Anahtar kelimeler:** Azerbaycan, Rusya, Türkiye, enerji stratejisi, politikası, Güney Kafkası

The Ottoman-Turkish and Persian-Iranian relations are rich with the long term competition and regular conflicts dated back to the XVI century. The main reason of adoption of Shiite by Iran was to distinguish Persia from Sunni Ottoman Empire. The main interests of Ottomans was related with Azerbaijan and Northern Caucasus, the Iranians directed their attention to Iraq where the saint cities of Shiite Islam was located. The elements of this struggle continued till the end of the World War I.
It wasn’t easy to build bridges between Post – Imperial Turkey and Iran, specially the conflicts occurred between Turkey inclined to USA and Iran being enemy of USA of the Islam Revolution dated 1979. Some relatively weaker forces such as Kurds in the region tried to balance the relations between these two countries, but their efforts were not enough to solve the antagonism gone deeper. Both of them were enemies of Iraq of Saddam Hussein, but it didn’t justified the establishment of the platform necessary for the collaboration. The wish of Iran to establish closer relations with its neighbours, the strategy “zero problem in the boundaries” caused to stability between them during the last decade. But a new historical competition, such factors as the conflict between the secularism of Turkey and the religiousness of Iran, as well as protection of the interests of USA by Turkey caused to cold attitude of Iranians towards these relations. The Iranian politicians tried to improve the relations in certain areas and they collaborate with Turkey in such fields as commerce, tourism.

Relations between Iran and Russia include the opposition and collaboration elements since the end of the XVI century. It is true that their regional hegemony inclinations led to more oppositions. Because, Moscow privileged in many conflicts on area and interfered in the internal works of Iran in the XIX century and beginning of the XX century. Historically, Iran saw Russia as the potential threat and preferred to speak from the defence position. Close relation of Iran with West during the years of Cold War aggravated the relations, the Islam Revolution dated 1979 put the ideological difference to another plain. However, trade on metal and industrial goods gradually developed the relations between Russia and Iran and since that time, this trade has become an important aspect of their relation. Iran considers Moscow as “a little devil” and tried to develop relations with Iraq helped by USA in the war dated 1980 – 1988 years, an economic protocol was signed in 1986 and thereby, they tried to prevent Moscow to help Baghdad. Within the last decade, Iran Kremlin has considered Iran as an increasing market (especially, for sale of arms) and as a potential partner in the Middle Asia and Caucasus in order to balance the interests of USA and Turkey. The collaboration and competition in the field of economy and energetics within the last decade has become the main driving force of this trilateral relation, while speaking about the relation between them, it is necessary to take into account this feature. These long term competitors make negotiations, establish economic and energetic collaborations and try to prevent conflict of interests and mutual doubts by this way, but at the same time, they struggle for different markets and compete for completely different political purposes and impact opportunities in the region.

Internal political changes and gradual polarization of the Muslim world put their signs in these mutual relations. Though that the remainders of the Empire gave certain privileges and obligations to Moscow, resources for dominating in Eurasia as the Russian Empire and USSR lack at it.

Turkey and Iran has become stronger rivals now, in its turn, China shows itself as a strong player in Middle Asia. Tensions increase between Sunni and Shiite communities of Middle East on the background of the Syrian crisis and the relations between Turkey and Iran become worse. These two countries struggling in order to increase the regional impact force demonstrate absolutely different positions in connection with Arab spring and the Syrian events. The leaders of Kremlin observe carefully the event occurred in Middle East and take into account that the Islamic wave will be spread on Eurasia and therefore, they try to return their influence in the region. But Moscow forces itself to be against the political changes occurred in Middle East by supporting its former allies and allowing to continue cruel repression by Assad and gradually spoils the relations with Turkey, USA and EU. Only some years ago, negotiations
were held on trilateral collaboration in order to balance the power of USA in the region and to obtain stability. The most important sign of it was the meeting of the leaders of three countries before the meeting supported by UN Security Council, USA and EU and held for sanction to the nuclear program of Iran. This solidarity example was continued by preventing the isolation policy of West against Iran in the 21st summit of the Conference of measures on Collaboration and trust held in Asia since 2002 hosted by Turkey. But, the fundamental political and cultural differences don’t allow these three forces to be together. In fact, the saying that the regional collaboration would whenever be “the competition to achieve the impact opportunities on Southern Eurasia, especially strengthening of this trend when more nationalistic and active regime come to power in Kremlin” in the first period after the Cold War have been justified (Hesenov, A. 2016).

Joint cooperation policy of Turkey with Southern Caucasus and Russia, variable interests

The present leadership of Turkey considers development of relations with Russia as one of the priorities since 2002. Commerce with Russia has been increased within the last decade of the Soviet period, Ankara preferred to strengthen economic and energetic relations in order to establish collaboration on political and security issues. Some Turkish and Russian regions enjoy mutual economic relations, profiting there relations, Kremlin plans to support Ankara in its more independent policy and opposing the policy of USA and EU. Both governments agreed on “strategic cooperation” in 2010 and it included Supreme Cooperation Council, Joint Strategical Planning Group researching annual summits, economic, political, cultural, security cooperation (Hesenov, A. 2005).

But, these relations have tactical features rather than strategic, because neither party has joint political agenda and their interests are forked rather than overlapping. Commerce, investment, tourism have been developed in large scale between these two parties within the last decade. Russian has become the second principal commercial supporter of Turkey after EU since 2008. In 2011, total mutual commerce exceeded 30 milliard dollar, it is true that 80% of it concerns the energy import of Turkey from Russia (Kasimli, M. 2014). Notwithstanding it, Russia is the third great import market of Turkey, product, textile and some consumables are sold in great volume here. Turkish businessmen have invested 7 milliard in Russia, Turkish contractors have executed projects in the amount of 33.8 milliard dollar. Both governments set as a target to increase the commercial turnover for three times and to reach to 100 milliard dollar till 2015 (it is true that some independent experts don’t consider it real). Tourism and small business have been increased a lot within the last two decades between these two countries, this circulation has been increased a lot after the application of visa free travel between them in 2011. Though that the mutual energetics relations are interesting for the parties, there are the competitive elements here. Trying to achieve balance in supply of energy purchased from Russia, Turkey also aims to be the leading bridge of energy to Europe and West. Turkey tries to decrease acute dependence on Russia in import of natural gas and oil (gas import was 55% in 2011 and oil import decreased from 40% to 12% in 2009-2011 years) and shows the diversification efforts. Moreover, Russia controls energy flow from the Caspian Sea and Black Sea and threatens the ambitions of Turkey in the Western – Eastern energy transit corridor and its effort to establish Northern – Southern energy transit corridor together with Russia can’t prevent it. Ankara supports the plan to deliver gas from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and though that it is contrasting, from Iran to Europe through Turkey within the framework of the Southern Gas corridor (including Nabucco project). As a rival, Moscow tries to commission the Southern flow pipeline, this pipeline pass-
ing through the bottom of the sea will be extended to Bulgaria. In 2011 Turkey gave consent for passing the southern flow pipeline through its exclusive economic zone in the Black Sea in order to achieved discounted prices in gas. Though that the works were begun in 2012 and the president Putin gave instructions to Gazprom on completion of the process in 2015, the Southern flow meets serious financial and technical obstacles. Turkey tries to increase the volume of gas purchased from Azerbaijan, but the opportunity of successes of the Nabucco project without additional financial aids and gas supplies are considered very low.

The plan of construction of Samsung – Jeyhan pipeline provided for to combine Russia, Black Sea and Kazakhstan with the Mediterranean through Turkey, but this plan was included in the negotiation processes held between Turkey and Russia. Turkey considers Samsung – Jeyhan pipeline for decreasing the number of tankers passing through Bosporus and increasing the role of Jeyhan as the energy centre. But the economic importance of this project is questionable from the beginning.

The government of Turkey established successful relations with Russia and worked effectively for the economic cooperation and security in the Black Sea region and protested the expansion of the operations of NATO here. Ankara also considers that cooperation in the field of economy, energetics and security with Russia will contribute to strengthening of its influence in this region. But, notwithstanding it, the cooperation in the Black Sea gave less economic profit from the economic point of view for other coastal states and it couldn’t become as an effective mechanism in regard to elimination of the regional crises as Russia – Georgia war dated 2008. Moscow met well the effort of Turkey to play more active role in Mountainous Garabagh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia within the framework of Minsk group of OSCE and Stability and Collaboration platform after Georgia war. Both countries participate together in prevention of terrorism opportunities occurred in connection with visa free travel. Notwithstanding deepening economic and energetic relations, high level political relations, tourism, good personal relations between Rajab Tayyib Ardoghan and Vladimir Putin, official persons in Ankara estimate these relations again in such events as Syria crisis, Arab Spring, as well, they observe anxiously return of Putin to the presidency, aggravation the Caucasus and Middle Asia policy of Russia and the blow on the interests of the Muslim communities with Turkey. The official position of Russia in regard to the relations with Turkey is seen somewhat confused. The financial dividends given by the mutual economic and energetic relations and the efforts to support the political dialogue are in front of eyes. Moscow meets the Near East and Northern Africa cooperation of Ankara with its USA and Western allies and placement of missiles of NATO disappointedly. Some Russian politicians and analytics state that there is more intensive competition potential with Turkey in the Caucasus. They expect the plans of Turkey to be the leading player in Middle East to be disturbed, in this case, the Turks will direct their energy and resources to the Caucasus again. They also take into account that Turkey is more Islamist under the leadership of AKP and the Headquarters of the Turkish Arm is not the effective defender of secularism and controller on power of Ardoghan. Some Russians are afraid that the cultural, religious and educational activities of Turkey in the Caucasus, Crimea, Middle Asia and other Muslim communities may cause to creation of radical Islamic movements in Russia and neighbourhood states (Maksimov, V. 2000).

The Russian Turkish relations reached to a complex turning point. Both parties are interested in establishment of mutual profitable economic and energetic relations without political opposition, but these efforts become more complex (Kasimli M. 2014).
Grounding the civil airplane of Syria with 17 Russian citizens flying from Moscow to Damascus and confiscation of the equipment called military radar by the government of Turkey in October 2012 caused to crisis. If Moscow doesn’t collaborate with the international community for the political changes in Syria and doesn’t play a constructive role in the region, the neighbouring countries in Near East will suppose that Turkey and Russia will compete for authority and Turkey will have more superior position here. Apparently, Russia and Turkey will settle their conflict of interests in the Caucasus and Caspian basin in the near future, but not coinciding energy and political interest, cultural and religious differences will lead to long term of this historical competition including Iran.

**Development steps in Iran – Turkey relations, mutual interests**

The relations of Turkey with Iran were with ups and downs. As many Turkish analytics stated, there are fundamental limitations here, they call this cooperation as a careful partnership with competition, doubts and deep cultural and religious differences. Abstaining from oppositions, both governments try to take profit from mutual beneficial economic and energy relations. The strategy of zero problem with neighbours established Ahmad Davudoghlu being the adviser of Ardoghan and then the minister of foreign affairs under the leadership of AKP. According to Davudoghlu, it is necessary to strengthen the geopolitical position of Turkey in the centre of Eurasia, to restore historical Ottoman relations and Muslim communities, to establish strategically deeper and wider impact opportunities in Turkey. The principal element of this strategy is expansion of the commercial and economic cooperation with all neighbours. Such kind of approach isn’t sourced from naïve and illusory ideas about the nature of Iran government. Contrary, this strategy consists of competition under peaceful condition and at the same time, strengthening of the economic power of Turkey and making it the energy hub is provided for here. The Iranian government plans to prevent its political isolation and unpleasant military actions in Turkey by meeting the needs on energy of Turkey and allowing its exit to increasing markets.

Turks were subject to repeated failures in the field of commerce and investment with Iran in the last decade. Tehran failed to execute the contracts on supply and commissioning of gas and oil concluded with Turkey and at the same time, even had to cancel the big contracts signed with Turkish company on modernization of airport of Tehran and establishment of Iran mobile telephone network. Nevertheless, Iran is the fifth great commercial partner of Turkey. General commercial turnover between two countries was increased from 1.05 milliard dollar in 2000 to 16 milliard dollar in 2011. Iran mainly exports energy to Turkey and its general volume is 12 milliard dollar. In 2010, two governments set as a task to increase the commercial turnover to 30 milliard dollar by opening more border doors. But modern analytics and businessmen believe that this target is unrealistic. Turkish officials have difficulties in movement in corrupt, confused and complex business environment. Commerce with Turkey comprises 6 % of the commercial turnover of Iran, some people in Iran argue that the markets growing for their goods and energy are in North and East. The principal two growing fields in the economic relations are the investment of Iran in Turkey and tourism. Iranians comprise the fourth great foreign citizen group coming to Turkey thanks to visa free travel, the number of tourists was 2 million people in 2010 and 2011. Increasing differences of opinion and sharp decrease in purchasing ability of Iranians led to diminishing of this figure in 2012 (State Program). In terms of investment, the Iranian firms prefer to work in Turkey in order to obtain access to the international markets due to sanctions, limitations in Dubai and other Gulf countries. More than 1470 Iranian firms functioned in Turkey at the end of 2010 (Guseinov V. 2002; Hesenov A. 2013). This figure was only 319 firm in 2002. Turkish banks could demonstrate themselves as a profitable partner for the
financial operations among such countries as Iran and India avoiding from irritating USA and the financial sanctions. Using these commercial relations of Iran, the USA government was anxious for its avoidance from the sanctions Iran and Turkey have been trying to increase the natural gas commerce since 1996, at that time, agreement for 25 years was achieved and according to this agreement, Iran had to sell 10 milliard cub meter gas per a year to Turkey. Iran never complied with this obligation basing on the domestic demand. Two countries completed the pipeline combining Tabriz and Ankara in 2002. Iran became the second greatest gas supplier (21 %) of Turkey after Russia. Exportation has been increasing within the last two years and this figure was 8.3milliard cube meter in 2011. Turks want to increase this figure to 16 milliard, but our researches and interviews show that the officials on energetics of Turkey abdicated getting more gas from Iran for such reasons as high gas price, quality problems, uncertainty in supply and failure in business with Iran. Moreover, Turkey appealed to the court for gas prices of Iran. The energetic strategists of Turkey plan to import gas from Azerbaijan in the short term perspective and from Iraq and Turkmenistan in long term perspective Iran was also the main oil supplier of Turkey and Turkey met 30- 32 % of its needs thanks to Iran for some years. Iran increased its share in oil importation of Turkey to 51 % by compromising in oil prices. Turkey was undergone to pressures regarding the choice between decreasing the oil import of USA and EU from Iran and the risk of being undergone to the sanctions applied by Tehran for the nuclear program (Balayev S. 1996).

The sanctions were contrary to the efforts of Ankara to develop the energy cooperation relation with Tehran and to eliminate the resolution regarding the nuclear crisis of Iran. Though that Turkey agreed on complying with the sanctions of UN, it refused additional sanctions applied by USA and EU. Turkey was refused for 180 days in June 2012, as it didn’t enter among 11 countries released from the financial sanctions, at it didn’t decreased the oil importation from Iran. As to working out of the Caspian basin and gas transit issue, the interests don’t coincide. Turks hope that it will be able to play the role of energy corridor for gas of Iran and Middle Asia to be delivered to Europe sooner or later. Iran prefers the Middle Eastern countries for exit to Europe and is against the trans –Caucasian route for delivery of gas of Middle Asia through Turkey.

The political and security cooperation between two countries was ambiguous. The approach of Turkey and Iran to Palestinian problem is similar, but their attitude toward Arab Spring and events occurred in Syria is completely different. The officials of Turkey are afraid of aggravation of Sunni – Shiite conflicts of Iran in Bahrain, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and supporting radical Shiites in Azerbaijan and Iran takes profit from these Shiites in the ideological struggle. Such kind of differences may lead to serious decompositions, even to conflicts in bilateral relations. Tehran and Ankara decided to take steps together against terrorism in 2008 and it included exchange of the exploration information and national struggle against Kurdistan terrorist groups, PKK and PJAK. Despite the first tactical cooperation, such kind of accusations as Iran and Syria supported PKK and Turkey diminished pressure against Assad regime were spread later. Turkey seized for several times the arms transferred by Iran to Syria through its territory last year. Despite all this, the Turkish government believes that Tehran will consider continuing diplomatic and economic relations and will demonstrate more pragmatic and less ideological position regarding with change of political power in Syria. Both parties try to diminish the impacts of Sunni – Shiite Cold War in Near East and peaceful solution form of Iran around the nuclear program. The continuing security concerns of Turkey about Iran and cooperation are
reflected in the measures of protection against missile. It supported the missile defence system of NATO in Lisbon summit in 2010 and agreed to establish the missile defence system of USA on its area a year later, but it reported that no country was considered as a threat. Tehran states that these efforts of USA increase the strain in the region and tries to persuade Ankara that two fellow countries can solve their security problems without foreign intervention (Ediger V. 2007).

Despite the continuing cooperation efforts of both countries, Turkey Iran relations have entered to the shifting phase. Nowadays, all elements of mutual relations are formed in accordance with the political changes occurred in Syria and Near East and the power struggle between Supreme Religious leader, President and the Corp of Islamic Revolution Guardians exerts influence on these relations in Tehran. Syria conflict impacts seriously the relations between Iran, Turkey and Russia and has already led to increasing competition regarding the regional impact power. While Syria losses its closest Arabic partner, Turkey tries to strengthen relations with Egypt and it includes increasing commercial turnover in the amount of 2 milliard dollar and joint military marine trainings.

**Developing strategy of Iran Russian relations**

Kremlin has considered Iran as an increasing market (including sale of weapons) and used it in order to balance the impact of Turkey and USA in Middle Asia and Caucasus within the last decade. Kremlin has never shared the idea of West regarding the security threat of Iran. The Russian leaders consider the anti-American ideology of Tehran as the means of balancing the political impact of USA and use the nuclear policy of Iran in order to achieve certain concessions from Washington. Notwithstanding the doubt of Moscow in its relations with Muslim communities, Iran develops relations with Russia and tries to use Russia for such great strategic purposes as multipolar world and prevention of dominance of USA. The bilateral relations were subsided in 2010 when Russia supported new sanctions of UN against Iran and after postponing the construction of Bushehr nuclear power plant because of “technical” reasons and cancelling the sale of S – 300 missile defence system. The president Putin wasn’t in good relation with the President Ahmadinejad and it seems that failure to execute the constructive suggestions regarding the amount spent on the nuclear fuel of Iran caused to coldness.

Weakening of relations with Iran infuriated strong, pro-Iranian lobby in Moscow and the representatives of the defence industry selling weapon to Iran were among them. But having disagreements with Washington regarding control on weapons, missile defence system, other events occurred in Syria and near East, Moscow began to cooperate with Tehran in new fields. Total commercial turnover between Moscow and Iran has been increased for three times within the last decade, but the amount of this turnover was only 3.5 milliard in 2010. Russia takes 2.5 % in the foreign trade turnover of Iran and Iran 0.6 % in the foreign trade turnover of Russia. The parties stated that they wanted to increase this amount to 10 milliard dollar, but it is obvious that it is a priority for neither party and increasing potential isn’t great, as their economies are different.

Small energy exchange takes place between Russia and Iran. They participate in gas production in the Caspian Sea together; a contract was concluded on development of oil and gas resources of the Caspian Sea in 2008. It is stated that some representatives of Gasprom work on the project of Gasprom in Iran, but, no signs of commercial production is known. The Russian institutions may sell certain energetics technologies needed and wanted by Iran, but it seems that Iran doesn’t seek for working of the foreign partners in its energy field. Despite the delivery of Bushehr 1 station, Iran concluded a contract with state owned Rosatom and achieved an
agreement on construction of additional nuclear reactors (according to the Russian-Iranian intergovernmental agreement, 4 nuclear reactors had to be built in Iran). There are disagreements on division of the Caspian Sea between two parties. Russia proposes to divide the Caspian Sea according to the boundary lines and it can sharply reduce the share of Iran in the energy sources of the Caspian Sea. Despite this disagreement, both parties are against the construction of trans-Caspian gas pipeline. Though that they are against these alternative routes of the Caspian energy, they consider themselves as rivals in the long term perspective in the European market. Iran and Russia are the founders of the Forum of Gas Exporting Countries and control 40% of global gas reserves, but the coordination of their policy is very limited (Balayev S. 1996).

Both Russia and Iran are interested in opposing the dominance of West, but some political issues make disagreement between them. The first one is the treatment of Muslim people in Russia. The second one is the fact that despite the sponsorship of the nuclear program of Iran, Russian people are anxious about it. At the same time, Russia is in political cooperation with the Western and Asian-Pacific countries and as Iran is in hostile relations with many countries, diplomatic problems occur. On the other hand, Russia considers the operations of Iran against drug smuggling in Central Asia effective enough for the region, this smuggling is dangerous for laws, rules and social health.

After the war in Georgia dated 2008, Iran became more active in terms of diplomacy in the Caucasus, it began to move in order to neutralise the impact of Russia and to protect its developing economic relations and energy route. Tehran declared that it had invested in some joint projects in the region, it took steps in order to facilitate travel to Iran, suggested to mediate between Azerbaijan and Armenia regarding Mountainous Garabagh conflict. Though that tension was increased with Azerbaijan, some Russian and international analytics consider that it deliberately avoids creating problem for Moscow in the Caucasus (Hesenov E. 2005). On one hand, they prevent participation of Moscow in new sanctions against Iran. At the same time, Sunni –Salafi groups fighting in the Northern Caucasus are not supported by Iran. At the same time, there are evidences that the principal elements of regime in Tehran consider the Caucasus as secondary, they are prepared for competing for Northern Africa and Near East and see their main purposes in those regions.

Both Tehran and Moscow take profit from the growing tension in Near East, support Assad regime, but their policy will not be useful for the position of both countries in the region in the long term perspective. Russia and Iran agreed on not having conflicts in the Caucasus and they have the similar purposes for the Caspian energy routes. But the mutual doubts and commercial and political interests causing to great competition don’t contribute to long term agreements.

_Changeable dynamics of Turkey – Iran –Russia trilateral relations and USA_

Understanding changeable dynamics of Turkey – Iran –Russia trilateral relations is very important in regard to taking into account Middle Asia, Near East and Caucasus policy of USA and the behaviour of these countries with each other. The policy of these countries towards each other is due to the relations with USA and USA can provide positive or negative direction of this policy.

Permanently supporting Assad regime and fearing from the forces behind the Arab Spring, Iran and Russia have to be against Turkey, USA and most part of the international community. Iran sees its relations with Syria and Hezbollah relation in Lebanon through Syria as the basis of “resistance axis” against Israel and its allies. Civil war and hybrid war in Syria involves the radical elements there, makes potential for greater conflict, especially Russian mi-
grants throng to Turkey and successive incidents regarding passing the boundary occur. Turkey may be involved in the war against Assad regime and maybe against Iran too, and it forces USA and other NATO countries to fulfil their commitments on collective defence.

USA shall take steps for ensuring fly free zone and safe heaven in Northern Syria for those escaping from the regime together with Turkey and other countries in order to avoid it. Moreover, it shall render more military assistance in the opposition of Syria and establish new diplomatic relations with Turkey, EU. Russia and Iran so that Moscow and Tehran give consent for changing Assad regime and potential power change could take place.

Civil war in Syria is the most terrible part of the powder keg in Near East, because regional conflicts and disputes can take place in greater scale here. Sunni-Shiite cold war is about to be flashed in the region. Iran continues its struggle against such countries as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and supports terrorists in Lebanon and Turkey. In addition, increase of tension between Israel and Hamas and known risks on military attacks due to nuclear program of Iran are in the focus of attention. Attack on its nuclear facilities means delivering a blow on the interests of USA and Israel in the world and it will lead to cessation of energy flows and greater global instability. Just therefore, USA and other countries of the international community try to settle the nuclear crisis of Iran in peaceful way. The continuing dialogue of Ankara with Tehran may be useful for achieving this goal.

The interests of Turkey, Russia and Iran in the Caucasus are demonstrated clearly. The Soviet legacy is still forming the strategic landscape and Russia protects its hegemonic position here. Ankara tries to develop mutual relations between these three Southern Caucasian countries and to strengthen their sovereignty and to expand the power and commercial relations with Turkey. It is true that after that the efforts of opening of Turkish-Armenian border in 2009 and normalizing relations didn’t give benefits, Turkey began to support Baku deeper. The interests of Iran in the region are improvement of relations with Armenia and approaching Azerbaijan, but Mountainous Garabagh conflict is also taken into account. Iran doesn’t want Russia to dominate in the Southern Caucasus, but avoids conflicting with Moscow and uses mistrust about Turkey in the region. Washington intends to strengthen the diversification, democratization of the commercial relations with Turkey and sovereignty and stability. In any case, Washington and Ankara will have to involve Moscow and Tehran in settlement of disputes in the region.

**Conclusion**

Though that the interests of these three countries and of USA don’t coincide in Central Asia, they have certain common interest points and they include concerns regarding instability to be occurred after withdrawal of troops by NATO in 2014. Long term relations and infrastructure opportunities ensure direction of the regional balance to Moscow. Turkey pursues commercial interests here and doesn’t want Russia to control the energy routes in the region, but the power of Turkey is limited here. Iran is anxious for such kind of problems as Taliban and drug smuggling in the region and tries to make the energy lines to of Central Asia through Iran. Iran takes into account the general relations of USA and West and the changes occurred in Near East and takes steps according to it in order to realize these purposes.

This careful behaviour between Turkey – Russia – Iran is very important for ensuring the interests of USA in Near East and Eurasia, as well as in terms of some global problems. Contradictions are deepening with Iran and Russia. The interests of EU and Turkey are closer to each other, but consultations on some disagreements are necessary. There is no doubt that, the relations between these four countries will continue to form the region and lead to important global consequences.
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