

**POWERS AND
REGIONAL SECURITY SYSTEMS:
PARAMETERS AND
TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT
(POST-SOVIET SPACE CASE STUDY)**

Jannatkhan EYVAZOV

*Ph.D. (Political Science), Deputy Director of
the Institute of Strategic Studies of the Caucasus,
Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Central Asia and the Caucasus
(Baku, Azerbaijan)*

ABSTRACT

It is hardly possible to correctly and fully assess the functioning and development of a regional security system without presenting a complete account of the entire range of ties and relations among the actors involved and the degree of influence of all the powers concerned.

Based on a case study of the post-Soviet space, the author studies the involvement of powers in regional security systems; his analysis of the key parameters of this involvement makes it possible for him to identify and describe two types of involvement: full and partial.

KEYWORDS: *regional security system, political environment of a regional system, powers, involvement, post-Soviet space, Central Eurasia, post-Soviet security macrocomplex, Russia, Turkey, Iran, China, EU, the U.S.*

Introduction

A Regional Security System (RSS) can include all types of actors: they can be ordinary states and those that can consistently project their influence beyond their territories and are usually called powers. The powers' involvement determines the system's development.

The type of involvement of a power in an RSS varies according to its underlying interests; the same parameter determines whether this actor should be regarded as part of the system or within the political environment of an RSS. The former presupposes that the power is involved in a web of security interdependencies in all the segments of the system up to and including corresponding ties with all of the system's states. The interests that create the main ties are securitized as existential, which presupposes that extraordinary measures must be taken to realize them.

The political environment of an RSS looks like a softer type of involvement: either the interdependence between the power and the system is not examined in the context of the fundamental security interests, or these interests only relate to certain segments of an RSS—states or geographically localized groups of states (subsystems).

I intend to discuss the specifics of the involvement of powers in regional security systems based on a case study of the post-Soviet space. In my previous articles,¹ I assessed the security interests and policy of power centers that should be primarily discussed in the context of the development of the RSS in the post-Soviet space (Russia, Turkey, Iran, China, the United States, and the European Union). The article addresses the common specifics of the involvement of powers in regional security systems based, in particular, on the empirics already discussed in my previous works.

I rely on the Theory of Regional Security Complexes (TRSC) as the theoretical and methodological foundation of my study.

System, Elements, Subsystems

What is the regional security system in the post-Soviet space? What are its structural and spatial specifics? I will start by trying to find answers to these questions.

Using the TRSC apparatus, I regard the post-Soviet space as a regional security complex (RSC), and assessing its type I adhere to Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's idea of the "centered great power regional security complex."² Early in the 1990s, the once hierarchically arranged political system of the U.S.S.R. shifted to the anarchically arranged RSC, i.e. the regional system of 15 former Union

¹ See: J. Eyvazov, "Russia in Central Eurasia: Security Interests and Geopolitical Activity," *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, 2009, pp. 11-22; idem, "Iran's Security Interests and Geopolitical Activity in Central Eurasia," *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Vol. 3, Issue 4, 2009, pp. 19-30; idem, "China in Central Eurasia: Security Interests and Geopolitical Activity," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 11, Issue 1, 2010, pp. 8-19; idem, "Central Eurasia through the Prism of Turkey's Security Interests," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 11, Issue 3, 2010, pp. 77-85; idem, "The West and Post-Soviet Central Eurasia: Certain Aspects of American and EU Security Strategy in the Region," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, 2011, pp. 7-21.

² The TRSC offers various types and forms of regional complexes; the most general typology distinguishes between a standard and a centered RSC. According to Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, in a centered RSC, the dynamics of security relations are determined by one power found in its center. The authors go on to identify three forms (depending on the specifics of "the central actor") of this type: centered on a great power—Russia in the post-Soviet space; centered on a superpower—the United States in North America; and, finally, centered on an institution (institutional RSC)—the European Union (see: B. Buzan, O. Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 55-61).

republics, the newly independent states (NIS) along with Russia as the system's only power pole. In some of my previous contributions I used the term Post-Soviet Security Macrocomplex (PSM) to account for the structural changes that occurred in this RSC in the 2000s.³

As distinct from the early development of the RSS in the post-Soviet space, an assessment of its current conditions demands that the structural changes caused by unification of the three former Soviet Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) with the institutional RSC in Europe (the EU) be taken into account.⁴ I leave aside the discussion on the causes of these changes and the stable/transitional nature of the PSM as a whole, and suppose that its present political structure should be regarded as the sum-total of twelve elements: Russia + the other 11 post-Soviet NIS.

Eleven newly independent states, which can geographically be described as the Central Eurasian⁵ segment of the post-Soviet space, form, in turn, local RSCs: Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova in Central Europe; Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia in the Central Caucasus; and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in Central Asia. Despite the fact that the newly formed regional subsystems have remained relatively autonomous, Russia continues functioning as the center that ties them together in a web of security interdependence of a PSM.

Powers and their Ties with the PSM

Russia is the only actor in the PSM structure that can consistently project its influence region-wide, being the key security factor for the NIS in the subsystems. This means that the development of local complexes, the dynamics of security relations among the member states, and their ties with external powers in particular, depend, along with endogenous factors, on Russia's activity.

There are few doubts, at least today, about Russia's involvement in the post-Soviet RSC. If revealed, the specifics of the involvement of the other powers concerned can suggest interesting conclusions related both to particular issues of the case and to the applicability and development of the TRSC apparatus.

Turkey, Iran, China, EU, and the United States form the platform of the political environment of the PSM. All of them, with the exception of the United States, border on the PSM (its Central Eurasian segments) and have certain interdependence of their security with the member states of the corresponding local RSCs.

Geography. Only the Russian Federation of the powers enumerated above has land borders with all of the Central Eurasian subsystems of the PSM: with Ukraine (1,576 km) and Belarus (959 km)

³ For more details, see: J. Eyvazov, "Some Aspects of the Theory of Regional Security Complexes as Applied to Studies of the Political System in the Post-Soviet Space," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 12, Issue 2, 2011, pp. 17-24; idem, "Central Eurasia through the Prism of Security: A Regional System or a Sub-System?" *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Vol. 5, Issue 1-2, 2011, pp. 6-15.

⁴ In 2004, these three former Soviet republics joined the EU and NATO, which reflects, at least, their involvement in the institutional RSC in Europe.

⁵ Here I am referring to the concept of Central Eurasia, Central Europe, and the Central Caucasus suggested by Eldar Ismailov, who regarded three post-Soviet regions as part of Central Eurasia: Central Europe—Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine; the Central Caucasus—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia; Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (for more details, see: E.M. Ismailov, "Central Eurasia: Its Geopolitical Function in the 21st Century," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (50), 2008, pp. 7-29.

in Central Europe; with Azerbaijan (284 km) and Georgia (723 km) in the Central Caucasus; and with Kazakhstan (6,846 km) in Central Asia.

The land contacts of the other powers are fairly limited. Iran has common borders with Azerbaijan (611 km) and Armenia (35 km) in the Central Caucasus and with Turkmenistan (992 km) in Central Asia. The land contacts of the others (apart from the United States, which has no common land borders with the PSM) are limited to one region: the EU with Central Europe (Ukraine, 1,159 km; Belarus, 1,456 km; and Moldova, 450 km); Turkey with the Central Caucasus (Georgia, 252 km; Armenia, 268 km; and Azerbaijan, 9 km); and China with Central Asia (Kazakhstan, 1,533 km; Kyrgyzstan, 858 km; and Tajikistan, 414 km).⁶

The Black and Caspian seas offer maritime contacts among the powers themselves, as well as between the powers and some of the states of the local RSCs: EU-Turkey-Russia-Ukraine-Georgia across the Black Sea; Russia-Iran-Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan across the Caspian.

Ethnic and confessional ties. Direct land contact is responsible for other common elements, particularly ethnic and confessional ties. Today, there are no cases where political borders repeat the outlines of the ethnoconfessional dividing lines. In almost all cases, there are ethnic and confessional minorities in one state whose compatriots constitute a majority in the neighboring state.

In the course of history, political borders change. Their dynamics, as a rule, outstrip the natural changes of the region's ethnic and confessional map. When applied to powers, the situation looks much more complicated: borders are changed by the use of force, while migration policies change their ethnic and confessional makeup. This fully applies to geopolitical rivalry among powers. Wars for control over strategically important spaces are accompanied by changed state borders and migration.

In the past, powers repeatedly used force to conquer the geopolitically attractive space Halford Mackinder described as "the Heartland". Their "comings" and "withdrawals" can be still traced on the ethnoconfessional map of Central Eurasia. Today, the region's ethnoconfessional structure figures prominently in shaping the key vectors of security interdependence among the post-Soviet NIS and between them and the powers involved.

Russia is the last of the powers that controlled Central Eurasia. Its withdrawal in the early 1990s did not signify total loss of the region's ethnoconfessional structure, which was to a considerable degree a product of Russia's long domination. All three Central Eurasian regions preserved fairly large Russian diasporas, the security of which cannot be removed from the scope of Russia's interests. On the whole, the Soviet Union's disintegration left about 25 million Russians outside Russia's borders.⁷ Irrespective of their citizenship, they constitute one of the most important factors of Russia's relations with the other post-Soviet states.⁸

Iran's most securitized ethnic tie is found in the Central Caucasus; here I have in mind the Az-eris, the second largest ethnic group of the IRI living mainly in the country's north close to the border with the Azerbaijan Republic.

Iran's ethnocultural ties with Central Asia are associated with the fairly large Turkmen community living in its northeastern part bordering directly on Turkmenistan. Special relations with Tajikistan form another vector of Iran's ties with Central Asia. Despite the absence of direct land contacts across a common border, the two countries share ethnic and cultural roots.⁹

⁶ The figures are taken from *CIA World Factbook*, 2013.

⁷ See: Ch. King, N.J. Melvin, "Diaspora Politics. Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy and Security in Eurasia," *International Security*, Winter 1999-2000, Vol. 24, Issue 3, p. 118.

⁸ Today, there are Russian diasporas in all countries of the Central European, Central Caucasian, and Central Asian regions; the largest of them are found in Ukraine (17.3% of total population), Kazakhstan (23.7%), Kyrgyzstan (12.5%), Belarus (8.3%), Uzbekistan (5.5%), Azerbaijan (1.8%), and Georgia (1.5%) (see: *CIA World Factbook*, 2013).

⁹ Tajikistan is the only Central Asian post-Soviet state that speaks an Iranian language.

As an Islamic state, Iran relies on confessional affinity when dealing with the Muslim NIS of Central Eurasia, even though the Sunni/Shi'a contradictions remain a stumbling block: the Muslim NIS (with the exception of Azerbaijan with its predominantly Shi'a population¹⁰) profess Sunni Islam. The advantages of confessional affinity between Shi'a Iran and Shi'a Azerbaijan were offset by ethnic and political problems, some of them inherited from the past: Tehran's fear of Baku's possible encouragement of irredentist sentiments among the Iranian Azeris, cooperation between Iran and Armenia and between Azerbaijan and Israel, etc.

Despite the fact that land contacts between Turkey and the PSM are limited to the Central Caucasus, its ethnoconfessional ties with the macroregion should be analyzed in a much wider context. The idea of Turkey's leadership in the Turkic and Muslim world goes back into the past; after the Cold War it became even more popular among the Turks.¹¹ Today, this is still one of the components of Turkey's security ties, not only with the Caucasus, but also with the Central Asian region. In post-Soviet times, Turkey largely based its relations with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, that is, the Turkic-speaking NIS, on ethnic and linguistic affinity. The Muslims of Georgia (Ajaria) and the Northern Caucasus have also been and remain an important factor of Ankara's regional policy. Besides, the vast Caucasian diaspora in Turkey has its say in the process.¹²

China's ethnoconfessional ties with the Central Eurasian regions of the PSM are geographically limited only to Central Asia, though it is fairly strongly securitized. The so-called Uighur Issue is the pivotal point in security interdependence between China and the Central Asian states. This threat is existential in terms of China's security, since the matter concerns an independent Uighur state, Eastern Turkestan, which might spring up in China's northwest, now called the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

The XUAR's ethnic, linguistic, and confessional ties with Central Asia are much older and much closer than those with China.¹³ Besides, there are zones of compact settlement of Kazakhs¹⁴ and Kyrgyz¹⁵ among the ten million Uighurs. The NIS that appeared in post-Soviet Central Asia added urgency to the old problem; on top of this, the Uighur diasporas of Kazakhstan (about 180 thousand-strong), Kyrgyzstan (50 thousand), and Uzbekistan (30 thousand)¹⁶ have stepped up their activities.

The XUAR with its predominantly Turkic-Muslim population remains a zone of greatest instability and centrifugal trends in the People's Republic of China.

The ethnoconfessional ties between the EU and PSM are also essential. They include: a Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Belarusian border zone (so-called Western Ukraine and Western Belarus), the question of ethnic affinity between the Rumanians and Moldavians, and the equally important issue

¹⁰ About 80% of Azerbaijan's Muslim population is Shi'a Muslims.

¹¹ See, for example: R. Burnashev, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects," in: *Central Asia. A Gathering Storm?* ed. by B. Rumer, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2002, p. 132.

¹² According to certain sources, there are about 7 million people with Caucasian roots among Turkish citizens (mainly Circassians, Abkhazes, Lazez, Georgians, and Azeris) (see: G. Winrow, *Turkey and the Caucasus: Domestic Interests and Security Concerns*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 2000, p. 32).

¹³ For more details, see: K. Khafizova, "Separatism in China's Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region: Dynamics and Potential Impact on Central Asia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (19), 2003, p. 7; Zhao Huasheng, "China, Russia and the U.S.: Their Interests, Postures, and Interrelations in Central Asia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (29), 2004, p. 117.

¹⁴ According to the 2010 population census, about 1.46 million Kazakhs live in China.

¹⁵ According to the 2010 population census, about 187 thousand Kyrgyz live in China.

¹⁶ See, for example: K. Shamshidov, "China's Approach to Multilateralism with an Emphasis on its Influence in Central Asia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 13, Issue 4, 2012, p. 33.

of the Russian population of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia,¹⁷ which figures prominently in Russia-EU relations.

Threats associated with the region. Ethnicities and territories bordering on the Central Eurasian regions of the PSM form an important, but not the only, vector of security interdependence between the powers and the regions. I have already written that all the powers, with the exception of the United States, have direct geographical contacts and ethnoconfessional ties with this space. One cannot say that these contacts are all securitized enough to stimulate extraordinary regional activity of the powers, so I have described the most important of them above.

In any case, most of the threats associated with this space are shaped, in different forms, by the latter's specific geography, the securitization of which, from the viewpoint of certain powers' military threats and vulnerabilities, is enhanced by the long history of their confrontation based on the threat of using force or wars in the region. This is especially true of how Russia, Turkey, and Iran perceive the region.

Russia's hegemony in Central Eurasia, which lasted for over two centuries, along with social and economic ties, contributed to a certain social-perceptual construct of "Russia's special interests and its role in the post-Soviet space". This was reflected in the foreign policy concept of the Near Abroad formulated in President Yeltsin's decree of 14 September, 1995 On Approving the Russian Federation's Strategic Course in Relations with CIS Member Countries. Considering Russia's interests in the former Soviet space Dmitry Trenin has put it as follows: "The Russian presence is common to all the new geopolitical constellations. European Russia, naturally, is part of the new Eastern Europe. Central Asia, which includes Kazakhstan, contains a significant Eastern Slav element. Transcaucasia is inseparably linked with the Northern Caucasus, which is an integral part of the Russian Federation. Thus, if there is any one country which can still view the other fourteen ex-republics as its periphery (albeit not a homogeneous one), it is Russia."¹⁸

The periods of Russia's domination in these regions fortified its international position and its Great Power status. This served as a sort of pattern, from which sprang a corresponding tradition. The Near Abroad concept is one of its foreign policy reflections. It is not surprising that throughout its post-Soviet history Russia has actively tried to remain in control in this space; everything other powers were doing to integrate this space or even compete with Russia in some of its parts looked like a threat to its interests.

In historical terms, this can be explained by Russia's traditionally firm grip on Central Eurasian regions and stability/instability of its domination there, and also by its military-political relations with other powers. This is true, in particular, of Central Europe and the Central Caucasus. At all times, the Russian state was apprehensive of the threats coming from these regions: their geopolitical specifics made them unstable peripheries of the Russian Empire, even when its domination there was absolute and unchallenged. During periods of weakness, the Caucasus and Central Europe were the main centers of the centrifugal trends. In 1917, when the empire fell apart, these areas put up stiff resistance to the reintegration attempts; at some point independent states emerged there. Central Asia was relatively much more compliant.

In the 17th-20th centuries, the three Central Eurasian regions, to different extents, were theaters of Russia's military-strategic rivalry with other powers: with France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary in Central Europe; with Turkey, Iran, and Great Britain in the Central Caucasus; and with Iran and

¹⁷ For example, in 2009, ethnic Russians in Estonia accounted for about 26% of its total population. In 1989, on the eve of the Soviet Union's collapse, there were about 30% of them. In Latvia, the share was about 30% in 2009 and 34% in 1989; the figures for Lithuania are 6% and 9.4%, respectively.

¹⁸ D. Trenin, "Russia's Security Interests and Policies in the Caucasus Region," in: *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. by B. Coppieters, Vubpress, Brussels, 1996, p. 91.

Great Britain in Central Asia. The former two constituted the main corridors of military invasion against the Russian state. Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and that of Hitler's Germany in 1941 left the strongest imprint on the historical memory of the Russians.

In the south, the threat was traditionally associated with Iran and, especially, the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ "Russians have always perceived its southwest tier ... as a possible invasion route to Russia. Given their traditional fear of encirclement, the Russians have always been acutely aware that the Black Sea and the Caucasus are critical strategic approaches to their homeland and to their important industrial areas and energy resources."²⁰ The Caucasus is one of the few peripheries where Russia's domestic weakness immediately ignited riots, undermined its control, and stirred the rivaling powers into hectic activity.

This history explains, to a considerable degree, Russia's current fears concerned with the regions, especially, the Kremlin's approaches to NATO's eastward expansion, and to Turkey's attempts to play a more important role in the Black Sea-Caucasus-Central Asia space.

In the past, Turkey and Iran were also active in Central Eurasia and cherished the Great Power ambitions in the region. From time to time, they warred with each other, or with Russia to gain (or preserve) control over certain parts of the region. Hence, relations within the Russia-Turkey-Iran triad have the fairly strong traditions of enmity. However, today for each of these powers the threats emanating from the region have their specifics.

Turkey competed with Russia mainly in the Black Sea and in the Caucasus, which means Ankara looks at these regions as the most vulnerable to possible military threats from the North.

Disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and emergence of Kemalist Turkey was accompanied by a fundamental revision of the previous regime's foreign policy priorities; the Great Power ambitions and idea of leadership in the Turkic and Islamic world (typical of the Ottoman period of its history) were moved aside to make way for ideas of integration with Western civilization. The republic normalized its relations with Soviet Russia, but Turkey's membership in NATO adjusted their relations to fit the bipolar confrontational logic of the Cold War.

Disintegration of the Soviet Union tipped the military balance in the Black Sea in favor of Turkey. At the same time, emerging several actors (Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia) instead of one (the U.S.S.R.) did not contribute fundamentally to decreasing Turkey's vulnerability from the North. In the mid-1994, Head of the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces Doğan Güreş said: "Russia, because of its policies in the Caucasus and Crimea, posed a greater threat to Turkey than at any time in the Cold War."²¹ In the 2000s, economic cooperation between the two powers, their relatively close positions on the Middle Eastern issues, and their criticism of what the West was doing in the Middle East somewhat eased the military-political tension in the Black Sea theater. However, domestic politics of both powers are characterized by trends capable of intensifying rivalry in their relations.

Under President Putin, Russia has been working hard to restore its Great Power status. This is amply confirmed by implacable centralization of power, anti-Western rhetoric, strengthening the armed forces and demonstration of their potential (the 2008 August war with Georgia), and the active use of economic and energy instruments to achieve geopolitical aims. Russia's relations with other powers (and with Turkey, its historical rival) will depend on whether it follows this road consistently and actively. On the other hand, Turkey remains undecided. It is vacillating between the Kemalist

¹⁹ Starting in the 17th century, over the span of 240 years Russia and Turkey fought over ten wars, mainly in the Caucasus (for more details, see: A.B. Shirokorad, *Russko-turetskie voyny 1676-1918*, AST Publishers, Moscow; Harvest, Minsk, 2000).

²⁰ See: A.L. Karaosmanoğlu, "The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Fall 2000, pp. 203-204.

²¹ Quoted from: G. Winrow, op. cit., p. 23.

course (which makes it part of the West) and its historical roots—an independent power with special interests in the Islamic and Turkish world. This means that the future of the current thaw between Turkey and Russia remains vague.

Turkey's relations with Armenia²² and the Kurdish Issue²³ are the two most securitized aspects of Turkey's ties with the Caucasus. In both cases, Turkey's territorial integrity is threatened. Moreover in the past, both the Armenian and the Kurdish issues were exploited by rivaling powers to weaken Turkey.

Iran's geographic and ethnic specifics make the state especially sensitive to the ethnopolitical processes unfolding close to its borders. According to different sources, ethnic minorities constitute nearly half of Iran's population; geographically they live in compact groups on both sides of the borders dividing single ethnic spaces. I have in mind the Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Balochi, and Turkmens. B. Shaffer has offered the following comment: "Iran's ethnic groups are particularly susceptible to external manipulation and considerably subject to influence from events taking place outside its borders, since most of the non-Persians are concentrated in the frontier areas and have ties to co-ethnics in adjoining states..."²⁴ This means that the domino effect started by an ethnopolitical conflict might be fraught with grave repercussions for the Iranian state.

For certain reasons, the Azeri Issue is one of the most securitized for Iran.²⁵ The Iranian authorities are apprehensive of a possible increase in irredentism among the Iranian Azeris and of the possible influence of external forces. They not only fear that the neighboring state will support these sentiments, but also that other rivaling powers might capitalize on Iran's "soft spot." This means that the fairly complicated ethnopolitical structure and the Azeri Issue, in particular, should be placed within the wider framework of Iranian security.

In view of the irreconcilable conflict between Iran and the United States, which from time to time goes as far as deliberations about using force against the IRI, Tehran is very concerned about its security in the neighboring regions, as well as throughout Central Eurasia as a whole. Iran's security can only be guaranteed if this space is prevented from being turned into a military-political foothold for the United States and its allies (including Israel and Turkey) to be used against the IRI in the form of direct military aggression, containment, or other actions designed to weaken its political system.

²² Turkey was among the first to recognize Armenia's independence in the early 1990s. However, they have no diplomatic relations, while the borders remain sealed off. Escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenian occupation of part of Azerbaijan's territory exacerbated the problems between the two states inherited from the past. Ankara insists that Armenia abandon its demand that Turkey recognize the fact of Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, and that Erevan abandon its claims to Turkish territory (the territory of the Ottoman Empire populated by Armenians that covers the contemporary vilayets of Erzurum, Van, Ağrı, Hakkari, Muş, Bitlis, Siirt, Diyarbakir, Erzincan, Bingöl, Malatya, Sivas, Amasya, Tokat, and part of Giresum [see: *Istoria Osmanskogo gosudarstva, obshchestva i tsivilizatsii*, ed. by E. Ihsanoglu, Transl. from Turkish, Vol. 1, Vostochnaia literatura Publishers, Moscow, 2006, p. 87]) and withdraw from the occupied Azeri territories.

²³ Radical Kurdish organizations are determined to create an independent Kurdish state in the territories on which their ancestors lived in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. A large number of ethnic Kurds live in Turkey's eastern part. From time to time, Turkey uses the army to suppress the terrorist activities of the Kurdish separatists who, back in the late 1970s, united into the Kurdistan Workers' Party responsible for over 30 thousand deaths.

²⁴ B. Shaffer, "The Formation of Azerbaijani Collective Identity in Iran," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2000, p. 449.

²⁵ The number of the ethnic Azeris in Iran in particular: according to *CIA World Factbook*, in 2012, they comprised about 16% of the 78.8 million-strong population. At the same time, there are reasons to believe that their share is higher. Historically, the Iranian Azeris are the most politically active population group. Starting in the 16th century, two Azeri dynasties—Safavids (1501-1722) and Qajars (1795-1925)—replaced one another on the throne. Under the Persian Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) and after the Islamic revolution, the Azeri provinces of Iran remained the most unstable part of the state, which Tehran can hardly control.

To a certain extent, China and Iran share a similar conceptualization of the regions of post-Soviet Central Eurasia. Very much like Iran, China badly needs a stable strategic rear in the northern and northwestern areas directly beyond its borders in order to concentrate on the key problems.²⁶ In the present conditions, neither Iran nor China regards the southern part of the post-Soviet space (despite the functional ethnoterritorial interdependencies) as the main theater of geopolitical rivalry and a source of direct military threats. Iran regards the Gulf as such; China, East Asia, or, rather, the part of the Pacific adjacent to it with U.S. regional outposts—Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Beijing fears an armed conflict with the United States in these theaters as the most serious security threat. The still pending territorial problem, the so-called Taiwan Issue is another, and fairly strong, impetus in the worsening relations with the United States up to and including an armed conflict between them in East Asia.

Unlike Iran, China is determined to acquire a superpower status. The Taiwan Issue looks like a greater obstacle and the most sensitive issue for Beijing on this road. It seems that unless Taiwan, the most developed of the breakaway Chinese territories, is integrated into continental China, this status will remain unattainable. Fully aware of the issue, Washington is in no hurry to share its world leadership with China. For this reason, America will go on protecting Taiwan's de facto independence as long as possible. This will add tension to the already tense relations between the two powers in East Asia in particular and will force China to maintain stability in Central Asia, its strategic rear.

The Uighur Issue creates difficulties both for China and Central Asia. The separatist sentiments in the XUAR threaten China's territorial integrity. This makes the country strategically vulnerable, to the advantage of those forces that prefer to deal with a weaker China.

Moreover, the Chinese leaders realize that Uighur separatism is supported, both ideologically and financially, by extremist religious organizations. From the very beginning, the XUAR independence movement demonstrated strong religious undertones. Later, religious issues were rapidly politicized in the post-Soviet space to gather new undertones after 9/11, which allowed Beijing to hold forth about the ties between Uighur separatism and the extremist religious movements operating in Central Asia—al Qa'eda, the Taliban, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and Hizb ut-Tahrir—which rely on terrorist methods to promote their ideas. In 2003, Beijing published the first list of terrorist organizations of Eastern Turkestan, which included the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, the East Turkestan Liberation Organization, the World Uighur Youth Congress, and the East Turkestan Information Center.²⁷ Accordingly, China's securitization of Central Asia is based not only on perception of the region as a space of transborder activities of Uighur separatists. Beijing is fully aware that the region might become an extremist and terrorist foothold to be used by groups and associations connected with the Uighur movement for penetrating into China.²⁸

Likewise, European and American security interests are also concentrated in the post-Soviet space. Despite what is being said in the post-Cold War period about minimization of the threat of a large-scale military conflict between Russia and NATO, no unified security community has appeared in Eurasia and the Euro-Atlantic space. The Western bias of the first years of Yeltsin's presidency in Russia was very soon exhausted to be replaced with ideas of restoring Russia's Great Power role in the world.

NATO's eastward expansion and its bombings of Serbia, uncompromising centralization of power under Putin seen in the West as a retreat from democratization, Russia's support of radical

²⁶ See: Zhao Huasheng, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

²⁷ See: Ibid., p. 117.

²⁸ See: Ibid., p. 118; M.T. Laumulin, *The Geopolitics of XXI Century in Central Asia*, KazISS, Almaty, 2007, p. 121.

anti-Western regimes (in Venezuela, Iran, and Syria) and military-technical cooperation with them, the U.S. Iraqi war, Russia's energy policy towards the EU and post-Soviet NIS, the 2008 August war in Georgia, the ABM contradictions between Moscow and Washington, the way the West looks at the state of human rights in the RF and the so-called Magnitsky List—this is a far from complete list of the factors responsible for the strained relations between Russia and the West.

From the purely geographical point of view, one could consider only the EU as related to the RSS in the post-Soviet space, while the United States should have been regarded as the only globally involved superpower.

The EU expansion allowed the European Union to acquire direct geographic contacts with Central Eurasia. In 2004 and 2007, when Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Rumania acceded to the European Union, it moved right up to the states of the region's European part (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine) forming a border over 3 thousand km in length. First, this placed the entire set of ethnoterritorial issues between the new EU members and these NIS on the all-European agenda. Second, this destroyed the buffer zone that separated Europe from political instability and conflicts in the post-Soviet space and the related, including transnational, threats (international organized crime, international terrorism, illegal migration, drug trafficking, etc.) that had affected the new EU members. Third, this changed the geopolitical configuration of the ties between the EU and Russia, the main power pole in the post-Soviet space. In two consecutive expansion waves (in 2004 and 2007), the European Union moved directly into the sphere of Russia's vital interests, and in some places, the Baltics and Poland, directly toward the RF borders. Aware of the EU's possible further expansion into the post-Soviet space (the possibility being confirmed by the ardent desire of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and some other NIS to become part of United Europe), Moscow had to retaliate against both the NIS enumerated and the EU itself.

Upgraded security interdependence in the EU-Central Eurasian NIS-RF vector was best confirmed by the so-called gas issue when Moscow tried to use energy resources as a political instrument across the post-Soviet space and in its relations with the European Union. Suspension of gas supplies to EU countries in 2006 and 2009, Moscow's intention to monopolize the oil and gas sphere in the post-Soviet space, and Gazprom's attempts to establish control over the gas-distribution system of Europe have contributed to securitizing in the EU the problem of its energy dependence on Russia and forced the Europeans to diversify their oil and gas sources, including building energy transportation lines in the post-Soviet space bypassing Russia.

The United States had no geographic contacts with the PSM. However, throughout the post-Soviet period its presence was no weaker than that of the EU, and it remains quite prominent today.

America's global involvement caused by the needs unconstrained by geographical limits and its capability of projecting its might worldwide means that its role in the development of the regions of post-Soviet Central Eurasia should be taken into account. This also means that the interests of two actors of Western civilization—United Europe and the United States—are relatively identical, even though the latter plays the first fiddle in many respects, including in determining these interests. From time to time, this arrangement crops up as excessive geopoliticization of even the seemingly common transnational problems that the Western tandem wants to resolve.

So far it is fairly hard to identify the direct security threats to the U.S. emanating from the regions of post-Soviet Central Eurasia, however, these regions border on areas that are extremely important for Washington's security agenda: Afghanistan and the counterterrorist campaign in general, the Iranian Nuclear File and WMD non-proliferation regime, as well as relations with Russia, which are steadily going from bad to worse, and with China, which is steadily moving toward the pedestal of the only superpower.

Powers' Involvement in Regional Security Systems: Key Parameters

Using the PSM concept, one has to accept that Russia is the only power involved in the structure of RSS functioning in the post-Soviet space. This means that Russia's key security interests extend to all its subsystems at the level of active stimulation of its corresponding (including extraordinary) behavior and relations with the states involved. At the same time, this should not be taken to mean that other powers are not involved and that their interests there are not as important as Russia's.

Let me remind you that the TRSC uses three concepts to describe the degrees of a power's involvement in the RSC: direct involvement in the structure, "penetration," and "overlay."²⁹ In the case of the RSC, which has open, non-suppressed dynamics of security relations, we should use the first and second of them.

The TRSC offers an explanation of the actor's direct involvement in the structure on the basis of two parameters: its involvement in "the web of security interdependence" and geographic proximity.³⁰ As for penetration, Buzan and Wæver describe it as a mechanism that connects the poles of the global system with the regional dynamics of an RSC: "Penetration occurs when outside powers make security alignments with states within an RSC." Consequently, in compliance with the TRSC, the penetration does not imply the actor's involvement in the web of security interdependence of an RSC.

A closer look at the direct involvement of an actor in an RSC reveals that the above parameters are closely interconnected and cannot be discussed separately. Or, rather, one leads to the other: the actor's involvement in the web of security interdependence of an RSC stems from its geographic proximity. The theory explains why geographic proximity plays an important role in determining the borders of an RSC emphasizing "the linkage between the intensity of military and political threats, and the shortness of the range over which they are perceived."³¹

In the case of powers, the factor of geographic proximity should be assessed from the viewpoint of the powers' main specifics—their ability to consistently project their influence beyond their territories. This means that in this case their involvement in an RSC is explained, first, by concentration of their key security interests in a region and, second, their ability to project their influence within the region. This stimulates security interdependence of this power with the other actors of the same RSC.

Furthermore, the presence of key security interests in the region should be stable, that is, it should stem from stable and prolonged securitization of the region by a power. In fact, the power's stable assessment of its security interests in the region based on historical memory and relations makes it possible to talk about the power's involvement in the web of security interdependence of an RSS.

When talking about the RSS in the post-Soviet space, one may wonder why Russia's activity should be regarded as a result of its involvement in the structure, while Turkey's or Iran's activities in the Central Caucasus (or China's in Central Asia) are described as a result of their "penetration?"

²⁹ B. Buzan, O. Wæver, op. cit., p. 49.

³⁰ B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*. Second Edition, Lynne Rienner Publishers Boulder, Colorado, 1991, p. 191.

³¹ See: Ibidem.

The prolonged and stable presence of their key security interests and geographic proximity, as well as the fact that they can project their influence in the region make the involvement of Russia, Turkey, and Iran in the Central Caucasian RSC identical. Even if we lower our assessment to the level of purely geographic proximity, this identity still counts and becomes even more obvious. The three countries have direct borders with the RSC even though the lengths are different: Russia has 1,007 km of common border; Turkey has 529 km, and Iran has 646 km. Differences in these figures cannot considerably affect the strengthening/weakening of their involvement, particularly they cannot be a sufficient basis for concluding whether these powers belong to the RSC or not.

When talking about the RSC in the Central Caucasus, we should recognize the fact that Russia is not the only power with locally concentrated key security interests. I have already written above that Turkey and Iran have their own security interests in the region, or, rather, there is an interdependence between them and the Central Caucasian states which, in certain respects, ties their key, existential, security interests to the region. For example, this fully applies to the interdependence between Armenia and Turkey caused by the former's territorial claims against the latter and the perceptions of historical insults associated with the 1915 events in the Ottoman Empire that the Armenians call "genocide." This fully applies to the fundamental connection between Iran and Azerbaijan created by millions of ethnic Azeris living in the IRI in the territory historically called "Southern Azerbaijan."³² Both cases are related to territories and population, that is, to the components of physical base of the states which, for obvious reasons, belong to their key security interests.

There are similar complexities in two other Central Eurasian RSCs. In Central Europe the problem comes from ethnoterritorial ties between three states (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine) and their geographic neighbors, the EU new members (Poland and Rumania). One cannot ignore the ethnic proximity between Moldova and Rumania and the related interdependence between them. Likewise, one cannot ignore the Western Ukraine and Western Belarus issues and their Catholic Slavic populations when looking at the web of interdependence of Ukraine and Belarus, on the one hand, and Poland, on the other.

Thus, if we recognize the aforementioned facts of security interdependence between the members of the PSM and the external actors, we should accept that not only Russia, but also Turkey and Iran (the Caucasian segment) belong to it; the same applies to, at least, Poland and Rumania in the European segment. For the same reasons we should count Iran (with its Turkmen ethnic community living in compact groups in the country's north and the unregulated Caspian problems) and China (with its Uighur factor) as belonging to the Central Asian subcomplex. But this will contradict the TRSC, which rejects "overlapping membership"³³ by saying that one and the same state can belong only to one RSC; this means that Turkey and Iran as members of the Middle Eastern RSC, Rumania and Poland as members of the European institutional RSC, and China as belonging to Northeastern Asia cannot be involved in any other RSC.

Post-Soviet empirics do not confirm this TRSC thesis, which means that it can and should be somewhat readjusted. When talking about the possibility/impossibility of "overlapping membership," one should pay attention to the state/power status of the member involved. In this respect, David Lake's assertion has certain consistency, according to which a Great Power can belong to more than one RSC.³⁴ The post-Soviet empirics discussed above confirm that not only Great Powers, but also powers with less international significance and a less ability to project their influence can be involved in more than one RSC.

³² Under the 1828 Treaty of Turkmanchay the Russian Empire and Persia divided the Azeri territories into Northern and Southern Azerbaijan.

³³ B. Buzan, O. Wæver, op. cit., p. 48.

³⁴ See: D.A. Lake, "Regional Security Complexes: A Systems Approach," in: *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, ed. by D.A. Lake, P.M. Morgan, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997, p. 64.

Powers can be involved in more than one RSC, but the extent of their involvements can be very different, which affects their activity in the regions. Why can a power belong to several RSC?

This is explained by the securitization specifics or, to be more exact, by the impact of geopolitical factors on it. The securitization process is very different in states and powers. It is much more geopolitically biased in powers, irrespective of their progress toward post-industrial societies.

Securitization is an autonomous and relative process³⁵; this thesis of the TRSC can be fully accepted. At the same time, because of its main role in shaping the actors' behavior and the development of RSS,³⁶ we must admit that, in contrast to the initial TRSC version, functioning of a regional complex is less associated with structural-political factors and much more closely related to other factors, including those related to the regions' social specifics. This means that securitization as a process of conceptualization by state/society of its security depends on a much larger number of factors, including historical assessments.

What does the society of a larger state-power with a corresponding political status, transborder military and economic potential, and historical memory of "glorious victories," its domination in different parts of the world, and also of its former "imperial might" and worldwide impact think about itself? Is it similar to what societies in smaller states think about themselves? The questions are too obvious to require long answers. The Great Power traditions inherited from the past are actively involved in shaping political ideologies in many powers, especially in those which have not entered post modernity.³⁷

These historical traditions are present in the ideologies not only of secular Russia, Turkey, and Communist China, but also of Islamic Iran. All of them are former empires that controlled vast stretches of Eurasia; all of them cannot but cherish and cultivate the historical memory of their glorious past. These traditions contribute to the political ideologies of these powers, which makes them indispensable securitization values. Consistency/inconsistency of a political ideology, in turn, directly affects the level of security, at least in the political and social sectors and, indirectly, the quality of the military sector. This means that devaluation of these values is dangerous to these security sectors.

The Great Power values, being a product of conceptualization by society of the history of its spatial influence, directly depend on the geopolitical factor. Each power that exists within its recognized borders is virtually present in those historical limits with which its Great Power status is connected. Socially perceived, its domination within the historical limits is not only natural but, frequently, an indispensable condition of its consistency as a state. This means that the efforts of other actors to gain control over the same space are seen as threats to the power's security.

Even if this association with the space of its historical domination is mainly perceptual, it can be actualized by material components—an ethnically/confessionally close population left behind.³⁸

³⁵ Within the TRSC, securitization is represented as relative and autonomous, that is, as a process that totally depends on the actor: "...different actors securitize differently: different political and cultural situations enable securitization in different sectors and they have different dynamics..." (B. Buzan, O. Wæver, *op. cit.*, p. 87).

³⁶ B. Buzan and O. Wæver have the following to say about the RSC seen from the prism of securitization: "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another" (B. Buzan, O. Wæver, *op. cit.*, p. 44).

³⁷ B. Buzan and O. Weaver distinguish three types of sociopolitical development of contemporary states: premodern states (with a very low level of inner sociopolitical cohesion and state organization, weak governmental control over territory and population); modern states (with strong governmental control of society, limited openness, sanctity of sovereignty and independence complete with their attributes (including territory and borders), placing stakes on self-sufficiency, self-assistance, and national identity); and postmodern states (with a moderate attitude toward sovereignty, independence, and national identity, economic, political, and cultural openness when dealing with the outside world) (for more details, see: B. Buzan, O. Weaver, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24).

³⁸ For example, the ethnic Russians who remained in the Soviet successor-states, or the Muslims who remained in the Balkans when Ottoman Turkey withdrew from the region.

These perceived ties between the power and its former periphery may be strengthened by historical support (obligations) assumed by the former in relation to certain people(s) living in this territory³⁹; sometimes society may interpret failure to live up to these obligations as defeat.⁴⁰

The fact that, first, several powers might claim a region (or regions) as their “natural responsibility zone” and, second, powers mostly preserve their ability to project, with varied degrees of efficiency, their influence on earlier controlled spaces, makes the situation even more complicated. This creates a web of security interdependence among powers and their interdependence with the newly independent states in the formerly controlled territory.

In Eurasia, imperial systems stretched over vast territories, therefore their descendants (nowadays reduced to powers) may still nurse Great Power traditions in relation to several regions and, accordingly, be involved in these territories with more or less equal concentration of their security interests.

At the same time, one should agree that the degree of concentration of the power’s security interests in regional systems will be different. This does not allow us, however, to speak, in one case, of the power as being included in the RSS (where its interests are highly concentrated) and to speak of its “penetration” in other cases.

- First, the very presence of key security interests (by definition vitally important for their holders) in the region(s) can be described as a sufficient motivation for its regional activity and its relations with others. It is not so important whether there are one, two, or three interests; the existential importance of each of them can be regarded as minimally necessary for any given power to be involved in regional security relations.
- Second, if we accept that securitization at the national level is autonomous and relative, we should also accept the relative nature of the vectors of its regional concentration. In this context, it is unwise to look at structural ties between actors as something static and not prone to changing, or rather to strengthening/weakening. One cannot exclude the possibility that the interdependence between states A and B as members of the same RSS will remain stronger for an indefinite period than interdependence between them and C as an external actor.

For example, can one insist and be sure that the key security interests of Iran in the Middle East associated with its relations with neighboring Iraq are much more important for Tehran than its key security interests linked with its relations with Azerbaijan in the Central Caucasus associated, in particular, with the multimillion compactly living Azeri community of Iran?

Moreover, considering the Eurasian regions, one should also take into account the dynamic processes going on there and the impact of the related military-strategic and economic changes on the way the Eurasian powers perceive threats to their security. For example, how will America’s wider/narrower military presence in Eurasia affect these perceptions? How will the region respond to Russia’s economic and military-technical strengthening/weakening against the background of higher/lower world fuel prices or stronger/weaker tension between Russia and the West? These are not easy

³⁹ Here is an example: Russia protected the Slavic peoples of the Balkans and Armenians and Ossets in the Caucasus, which in the 19th and 20th centuries involved it, together with other factors, in wars with Ottoman Turkey. In 2008, Russia, which started a war against Georgia, argued that it had to defend the Ossets of Georgia. Before moving troops inside Georgia, President Medvedev made a fairly important statement: “Historically Russia has been, and will continue to be, a guarantor of security for peoples of the Caucasus” (quoted from [<http://ncafp.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Implementation-Review-Russia-and-Georgia-Aug20111.pdf>]). The same applies to the historical ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan and the Muslims of Georgia and the Northern Caucasus.

⁴⁰ Russia’s inability to protect the Serbs and prevent the NATO bombings in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 and in Serbia in 1999 and effectively protect the rights of ethnic Russians in the Baltics is seen in Russia as its tangible defeat.

questions; likewise, it is not easy to predict strengthening/weakening security interdependence in Eurasian regions caused by an autonomous and conventional securitization process.

There is another, purely material, factor which complements the set of distinctions between a power and a state; this factor should also be taken into account while considering the “overlapping membership” issue. Powers are large states, while large states have large needs, which, conceptualized as national interests, must be realized. As distinct from small and medium states, powers frequently cannot realize their needs within narrow geographic limits; this forces them to go beyond the borders of one region. Depending on the nature of pivotal needs, interests may be existential for the given power. As distinct from the state, the power can consistently project its influence beyond its territory; it does not need geographic proximity to realize its interests.

International terrorism and other forms of transborder criminal activity, WMD proliferation, as well as energy security are developing into fundamental motives behind powers’ involvement in important regions often located far away from those areas which should be the potential hubs of their existential interests. The way Washington treats South Asia (Afghanistan) and the Middle East (Iraq)—here I have in mind the use of force—serves as a pertinent example.

Types of Regional Involvement of Powers

Admitting that powers can be involved in more than one RSS, one must establish the cases and forms in which this is possible.

First, the power’s involvement in the RSS may be *full*, when it is present in the web of security interdependencies of the system at the level of key security interests in all the subsystems, up to and including corresponding ties with all the states, and *partial*, when such security interdependence between the power and the RSS develops at the level of the system’s individual subsystems.

It is important to distinguish between these types of involvement and penetration. In the latter case, the power’s activity is unrelated to its consistently long presence in the web of interdependence of the key security interests either at the level of system, or its subsystems. In this case, the power may have relations with (or obligations in relation to) some of the system’s states. But these relations and obligations are not securitized as key interests, the violation of which creates existential security threats for the power.

Being an element of an RSS, the power is fully involved in it, while examining the power within the system’s political environment does not necessarily presuppose its partial involvement. The system’s political environment does not exclude the presence of powers with no key security interests concentrated in it: they penetrate it for their own reasons, but their ties to the system are not based on their existential interests. In some cases, the political environment might overlap the “zone of indifference” and include “insulator states.”⁴¹ Partial involvement, in turn, presupposes that the power’s security is intertwined with that of the RSS at the level of the system’s individual subsystems.

From this it follows that a power can be part of a system when it is fully involved and part of political environment when it has penetrated it. Partial involvement presupposes an intermediary level of ties and influences between the system and its political environment.

Second, geographic proximity, being not crucially important for powers that can consistently project their force, including its military component, far and wide, remains still important as one of the parameters of involvement in the system. Indeed, irrespective of the actor’s power potential, its security in the first place are related to its physical components—territory and population. Any pow-

⁴¹ The TRSC uses these categories to identify the borders between regional complexes.

er even having strategic weapons and mechanisms of containment of an aggressor concentrates primarily on neutralizing the threats coming from adjacent areas, the range of which is much broader than that of traditional threats: it includes ethnoterritorial conflicts, religious extremism, and terrorist activities. Indeed, Russia is coping with chronic problems of this sort in the Northern Caucasus, Iran has difficulties with the Azeri-populated areas, while Turkey is dealing with problems in the Kurdish provinces adjacent to the Central Caucasus. Moreover, common geography imparts stable nature to the power's security assessment of the region that is also important for the power's presence in the system's security interdependence web.

Different RSS are differently securitized by a power. A power may be fully involved in only one RSS, while the number of partial involvements depends on its geography (i.e. its nearest neighbors), historical memory (the regions related to it by Great Power traditions), material components (kindred ethnicities and confessions) and, finally, the current world status and corresponding ability to project its influence. The structure of involvement of the Eurasian powers is presented in the following table.

Table

Regional Involvement of the Eurasian Powers

Type of Involvement Power	Full	Partial		
Russia	Post-Soviet space	Northeastern Asia (Japan, Korean Peninsula)	South Europe (the Balkans, western Black Sea area)	Northern Europe (the Baltics)
Turkey	The Middle East	Post-Soviet space (Northern Black Sea area, the Central Caucasus)	South Europe (the Balkans, western Black Sea area)	
Iran	The Middle East	Post-Soviet space (the Central Caucasus, Central Asia)	South Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan)	
China	Northeastern Asia	Southeast Asia (Indochina)	Post-Soviet space (Central Asia)	South Asia (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan)

Specifics of the EU and U.S. Regional Involvement

The specifics of the European Union's and the United States' regional involvement, which are somewhat different from the standard ideas about the ties between an RSS and the neighboring powers, deserve special attention.

At the very beginning of the present article, I identified both actors within the PSM political environment. This suggests several questions, the first of which deals with the nature of the EU as a political actor: can we talk about the EU as a power?

When looking at Europe's involvement in the PSM in an effort to assess the functionality of its security relations with other actors, we are confronted with the issue of the EU's competency as a single holder of interests and related policy. No matter how far European integration has progressed, the EU can be hardly described as a single state, let alone a power. Within the TRSC, one can talk about the possible evolution of the EU from an "institutional" RSC⁴² to a more amalgamated political actor.⁴³ Today, however, this is a long-term rather than short-term prospect accompanied by a multitude of questions, three of which have been formulated by Buzan and Wæver: "...is the EU able to take care of its own security without dependence on external powers? What are the interregional security dynamics between EU-Europe and its neighboring complexes? And to what extent and in what ways does the EU appear at the global level as a power of sorts?"⁴⁴

As a source of strong economic impact, the EU is still working to form a unified course in the sphere of foreign and security policy. Its inner dynamics are still based on relations among sovereign states that can independently establish relations with neighboring regions.

The EU's influence is based mainly on its economic potential; in military matters the EU still depends on the United States. This means that despite a certain degree of consolidation within the EU (common interests in relation to neighboring regions), it should be regarded as the U.S.'s partner when it comes to military activities.

The EU today is a target of external impact, that is, it is an RSS, and an actor with certain external interests and the ability to realize them when dealing with neighboring regions. The qualities of the former are obvious, while those of the latter still look dubious and unstable.

The United States, on the other hand, is the mightiest power of the post-bipolar world; it is the "only superpower" with global interests and the corresponding capability to project its influence. This makes it much harder to identify its real involvement in various RSS.

Within the TRSC, the United States belongs to the North American RSC. At the same time, the empirics of the post-bipolar world have demonstrated that its main, and sometimes extraordinary, activity is concentrated far beyond the limits of North America. The U.S. is involved in protracted military conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia. Should this be taken to mean that the U.S. is involved in the RSS in these parts of the world?

While postulating the impossibility of "overlapping membership," the TRSC admits that superpowers possess certain specifics: "Superpowers by definition largely transcend the logic of geography and adjacency in their security relations."⁴⁵ Buzan and Wæver tend to explain this through the mechanism of penetration.

Irrespective of theoretical deliberations, America's real involvement in these geographic regions far removed from its territory stems from security interests; more than that—they are securitized as key interests. When talking about the RSC through the prism of securitization (see footnote 36), one can easily discover that the "major processes of securitization" in the United States link it with the states of these regions (Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and North Korea) to a no lesser extent than the "securitization processes" that form the North American RSC. Moreover, these "major processes of securitization" are mutual. American perception of the Iranian or North Ko-

⁴² B. Buzan, O. Wæver, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴³ See: B. Buzan, op. cit., pp. 218-219; B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. De Wilde, *Security. A New Framework for Analysis*, Rienner Publishers Boulder, London, 1998, p. 12.

⁴⁴ B. Buzan, O. Wæver, op. cit., p. 373.

⁴⁵ Idid., p. 46.

rean threat is functional to the same degree as perception by Iranians or North Koreans of the American threat. As sovereign states under Saddam Hussein and the Taliban, Iraq and Afghanistan regarded the United States as an immediate threat; America reciprocated in kind. This means that we are dealing with partial involvement of the U.S. in these distant regions rather than with penetration.

America is a special case that does not fit the standard mechanisms of contacts between powers and different RSS. In the previous chapters I touched the problems of powers' special needs and projection of influence. In the case of the United States, we are dealing with global needs (at least perceived as such in America) and the unprecedentedly extensive potential of projecting influence (up to and including military force—the Navy, military bases, and SOA), which outstrip the potential of all other powers. In classical powers, Great Power traditions serve as a factor of regional involvement. In the case of the United States, we are dealing with a superpower, “the sole and, indeed, the first truly global superpower,” as Zbigniew Brzezinski put it,⁴⁶ with a corresponding stable self-perception.

It seems that the specifics of the regional involvement of superpowers should be further studied. And the present empirics do not suggest that the U.S.'s involvement should be limited to the North American RSS. To be more exact, in view of the fact that the United States is fully involved in the North American regional system, one should also designate its partial involvement in some other RSS, in particular in the Middle East, the post-Soviet space, and Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southern Asia.

Powers' Regional Activity

The question of what a power is doing to realize its interests in an RSS falls well within the context of the problem discussed. Indeed, the degree of a region's securitization depends on what a power is determined to do to promote its interests in this region. Is this activity limited to standard everyday diplomatic mechanisms, or does it include extraordinary measures, up to and including the use of force? The answer to this question, among other things, clarifies the extent to which a power is involved in an RSS.

The empirics of the development of the RSS in the post-Soviet space clearly points to Russia as the region's most active power. This is obvious at the level of declaration of its interests and at the level of the range of mechanisms employed.

All the three Russian presidents insisted that the post-Soviet space was a zone of Russia's special interests. This was said in plain terms in President Yeltsin's Decree on Approving the Russian Federation's Strategic Course in Relations with CIS Member Countries, in President Medvedev's Five Principles of Russia's foreign policy formulated in the wake of the Russian-Georgian crisis of 2008, and in the Decree on Measures for Implementation of the Foreign Policy Course of the Russian Federation of 7 May, 2012, which outlined the foreign policy priorities of current Putin's administration. In the final analysis, they are different stages of the development of the Near Abroad concept, in which the pivotal point is the region's primary importance for the Russian Federation.

Russia has been strongly opposed to trends fraught with the danger of removing the post-Soviet NIS from its orbit and, in particular, to the efforts of other countries to fortify their positions there.

⁴⁶ Zb. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. xiii.

The range of instruments employed is fairly wide: standard diplomatic activity complemented with extraordinary measures—manipulation with ethnopolitical conflicts in some of the states, support of separatism⁴⁷; economic instruments (the liberal empire tactics)⁴⁸; energy domination; and, finally, the use of military force against Georgia in August 2008.

Other powers are less active. All of them used certain means and methods (ranging from the economy, political support, and military-technical cooperation with the local NIS to elements of “soft power”) to build up their influence in the regions with the greatest concentration of their interests. Today, there are clear signs that none of them is ready to use harsh methods, up to and including the use of military force, to promote their interests, even though something similar did happen in the past: the situation in Georgia during its military conflict with Russia can serve as a pertinent example.

The response of Turkey, the EU, and especially the United States to Russia’s use of military force against a newly independent state in which their interests were concentrated differed greatly from the previous empirics. The United States sent their warships to the Georgian Black Sea coast; together with accented diplomatic activity of the EU and Turkey this contained Russia.

Surely, the August 2008 case demonstrated that Russia was ready to resort to extraordinary measures in the region. But it also can be helpful in explaining why other powers with security interests in Georgia demonstrated moderation and restraint.

- First, the extraordinary activities of a political actor under the pressure of securitized interests do not always presuppose a war; this is less likely in the case of powers’ relations and even less likely in the case of powers possessing strategic weapons. In August 2008, the response of Turkey, the EU and the U.S. to the fact that Russia moved its troops into Georgia was fairly strong and, in fact was among the main factors halting Russia’s movement within Georgian territory. It seems that it was thanks to their concerted efforts that Russia signed a truce and withdrew its troops from Georgia’s main territory.
- Second, even though Russia’s response to Tbilisi’s attempt to restore the state’s territorial integrity was harsh, the Kremlin clearly outlined the principles for which it was prepared to fight. Georgia’s defeat was a negative factor for the United States, Turkey, and the European Union, but Russia never crossed the line beyond which their key interests lay. If Russia had used military force to liquidate Georgia’s independence, remove the West-oriented Saakashvili administration, or destroy the fuel transportation system which brought Caspian energy resources to Turkey across Georgia, the response of the three actors would have been different.

⁴⁷ Here I have in mind Russia’s unofficial support of separatist movements in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova—Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria (see, for example: B. Coppieters, “The Politicisation and Securitisation of Ethnicity: The Case of the Southern Caucasus,” *Civil Wars*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2001, pp. 74-75; A. Malashenko, “Postsovetskie gosudarstva Yuga i interesy Moskvyy,” *Pro et Contra*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2000, pp. 42-43; S.E. Cornell, R.N. McDermott, W.D. O’Malley, V. Socor, F.S. Starr, *Regional Security in the South Caucasus: The Role of NATO*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Washington D.C., 2004, p. 16; S.E. Cornell, “Undeclared War: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Reconsidered,” *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Summer 1997, p. 12; A.I. Utkin, *Mirovoy poriadok XXI veka*, EKSMO Publishers, Moscow, 2002, pp. 400-401; A. Mörke, “The Military as a Political Actor in Russia: The Cases of Moldova and Georgia,” *The International Spectator*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, July-September 1998, available at [http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/iai/iai_98moa01.html], 13 December, 2007).

⁴⁸ In this context, the “liberal empire” concept deserves special mention, according to which Russia should restore its influence in the NIS through economic expansion (see: A. Chubays, “Missia Rossii v XXI veke”, *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 1 October, 2003). It was realized when Russia bought economic facilities in Armenia in exchange for debts; it also tried to apply the same pattern to Georgian and Ukrainian energy infrastructure facilities, etc.

Involvement presupposes accentuated activity, up to and including its extraordinary measures. At the same time, the absence of the highest forms of such measures (use of military force) should not be taken to mean that the power is not involved. The Russian-Georgian war stimulated active interaction between the interested powers at the bilateral level—Russia-the U.S.; Russia-Turkey; Russia-EU—and at the U.N. level—extraordinary meetings of the U.N. SC on the Georgian developments, at which the U.S. and Georgia, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, failed to arrive at a concerted opinion about what had happened and to agree on a common resolution.

There are other examples of accentuated activity of powers in post-Soviet Central Eurasia which, from time to time, went beyond the limits of standard diplomacy. Here are some pertinent examples: Turkey and Iran in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; Iran during the civil war in Tajikistan; Turkey during the North Caucasian instability in the 1990s; the U.S. in Georgia and Ukraine during the so-called velvet revolutions; America's policy in the Central Asian NIS during the Afghan campaign, etc.

One can hardly say that Russia has been the only power actively involved in an RSS in the post-Soviet space, even in the context of the very short and empirically poor post-Soviet history and the small number of extreme situations similar to that of August 2008. On the other hand, the level of regional activity of a power depends on the degree of its involvement in a RSS. Full involvement presupposes more pronounced activity and, hence, a bias toward extreme types of activity. The Russian-Georgian war and the powers' different behavior patterns can serve as an example.

Conclusion

An efficient assessment of any political space from the point of view of the regional security system presupposes that the entire range of ties and relations among its elements and between them and external actors is taken into account. The RSS polarity and the impact of external powers are especially important in this respect.

The RSS in the post-Soviet space is very illustrative: it clearly reveals a particular power's ties with the system and the specifics of its involvement in the system. Based on its study presented in this article, I have concluded that there are two types—full and partial—of this involvement. In the first case, the power is present in the web of the system's interdependence at the level of the key security interests in all of its subsystems, up to and including corresponding ties with all its states. In the second case, security interdependence of this kind is formed at the level of the RSS's individual subsystems.

Partial involvement makes it hard to identify the borders between an RSS and its political environment. A fully involved power is part of the system and determines its polarity. As part of the political environment of the system, a power can be related to it through the mechanism of penetration. Partial involvement presupposes an intermediary level of ties and impact between the RSS and its political environment.

Both types of involvement are rooted in the interdependence of the power and the RSS at the level of the key security interests. Accordingly, for this power securitization of regionally-related threats and vulnerabilities may encourage extreme forms of its activity in an effort to neutralize them. Because of its more pronounced and more concentrated existential interests, a fully involved power is more inclined toward such forms of activity.

Russia, Turkey, Iran, China, the EU, and the United States are all power centers involved in the RSS in the post-Soviet space. So far, however, Russia is the only power fully involved in this re-

gional system, while the others, as partially involved, serve as its political environment. Accordingly, one can determine the polarity of this RSS: here we can speak about the unipolar RSC, or to use a TRSC term, about the RSC “centered on a great power.”

The present structure of the Post-Soviet Security Macrocomplex consists of 12 elements, namely, one power (Russia) and the other eleven NIS in its three subcomplexes—Central European (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine); Central Caucasian (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia); Central Asian (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). Twenty years of post-Soviet development have demonstrated that the PSM is structurally unstable, which widens the range of opportunities to consider it as a transitive system. This and the soft form of its unipolarity are related to the specifics of its political environment. The large number of partially involved powers contributes to the system’s decentralization and plays the role of a containment factor for its only pole.

The crucial parameter of an actor’s involvement in an RSS is the key security interests it has concentrated there. In the case of an ordinary state, these parameters are still closely related to its geographic proximity; in the case of a power, geography is not indispensable for the concentration of its security interests. Geographic proximity, however, is indispensable for the power’s full involvement; in the case of partial involvement, the geographic factor is important, but taking into account the specifics of the U.S. as a power and of its regional involvement it cannot be described as indispensable. The key security ties of Turkey, Iran, China, and the EU with the PSM in its different subsystems are based on geographic proximity. On the other hand, the fact that the Eurasian regions (the Middle East, the post-Soviet space, and Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southern Asia) are far removed from the territory of the United States does not devalue their importance from the viewpoint of America’s security interests. The nature of these interests suggests that the “only superpower” is partially involved in the RSS functioning in these regions.

The United States is the only exception; the security ties of all other powers with the PSM are rooted in geographic proximity and, therefore, have ethnoterritorial dimensions. Hence it cannot be removed from the scope of their key interests. Moreover, the Central Eurasian regions of the PSM form a space of security interdependence between the involved powers and, by the same token, a sphere of their geopolitical interaction. The amity/enmity in their relations is projected to the region and motivates their regional activity.

Oil and gas in the post-Soviet space are other factors of strong motivation of the powers involved. Some of them—the EU, the U.S., Turkey, and China—regard the region’s energy potential as a chance to upgrade their energy security; others—Russia and partly Iran—as a tool to be used to gain political advantages and upgrade their power status in the world.

This space is a source of non-traditional threats, which also stimulates the involvement of powers in the regional NIS. These interests have already caused military interference of the United States and its European allies in Afghanistan and the use, for this purpose, of the territories of adjacent Central Eurasian states.