



Iran in the Geopolitics of the Contemporary Middle East

Rafal Ozarowski¹

Abstract

Geographical position of Iran between the “core” of the Middle East and Central Asia and between Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea makes this country one of the most important political actor in West Asia. Huge oil and natural gas resources strengthen Iranian geographical position in the category of geostrategic value. Taking into consideration, deteriorating situation in neighboring countries, particularly turmoil in Iraq and extended U.S. military presence in this country, and instability in Afghanistan with NATO engagement in conflict with Taliban movement, Iran has a great opportunity to realize its aspirations to become a regional power. In a previous decades strong Iraqi regime competed with Iran about domination in the Persian Gulf. This rivalry with climax during Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) stemmed aspirations of Iran effectively in order to be the only power in this sub region. When Saddam Hussein regime has been overthrown by US and allied forces, the crucial Iraqi link in the system of Middle East disappeared. Thus, paradoxically U.S. entrapped themselves and eliminated traditional Iranian competitor in the area of Persian Gulf. Currently unstable and politically and economically weak Iraq has no such a geopolitical meaning as it had in the past. Regarding the issue of Afghanistan, excluding any role might be taken by Iran in solving the case of Taliban threat by U.S. is undoubtedly inappropriate. So, nowadays exclusive ability of NATO to settle these tensions down seems to be very unlikely. In order to reach the aim of making Afghanistan more stable they need to start cooperation with neighboring states particularly with Iran which has a historical, ethnic and linguistic ties with Afghan people. In this paper the issue of relations between Iran and Arab monarchies is also underlined. Some of these states like Kuwait and Qatar prefer to cooperate politically with U.S., hosting American troops on their soil and treat them as a “proxy army” guaranteeing security. However, Americans who are in troubles in Iraq may not be a reliable partners as it is perceived by United Arab Emirates which has signed the agreement with France on opening military base. It makes the sub region of Persian Gulf more polarized in a military sense. From the geopolitical point of view there is also a bigger chance for Iran to pursue its own policy in order to dominate Persian Gulf area. Definitely, in one sub region it is much easier to balance between few actors with military presence, than to confront with the only one. The paper will explain the roots and main

¹PhD, Political Science Institute, University of Gdansk, Poland, ozaraf@univ.gda.pl



issues of contemporary Iranian policy in the Middle East (Greater Middle East) analyzed by using geopolitical theory, which shows links between geography and potential of state, its behavior, and aspirations in the international relations.

Keywords: geopolitics, Geo-strategy, Iran, Greater Middle East, international security