

Central Asia in the US Foreign Policy Strategy

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Abstract: The collapse of the Soviet Union the newly independent states of Central Asian region faced the problem to form and develop their own independent foreign policy. In this regard the US as a great power pursued its interests. In this study, we analyzed the main concepts and documents that affect the formation of the US strategy towards the Central Asian states. By analyzing key concepts and strategies the evolution of the US foreign policy and its main features were indicated.

Key words: The US foreign policy, Central Asian region, greater Central Asia, new silk road, Russia

INTRODUCTION

International relations have undergone some changes with the emergence of new independent states of the former Soviet Union. In this regard the competition between the major global powers and international organizations increased for the spheres of influence. The situation was also changed in Central Asian region as each of these states defends their interests in a changing world.

The events of last decades increased attention to Central Asia due to its geopolitical and strategic location and features. This region located in the central part of Eurasia. Despite the lack of precise definitions of boundaries of this region we consider in this study Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan five post-Soviet states. Historically, this region has been known as a region connecting Europe, the Middle East, South and East Asia through the Silk Road. Now a days the powers pursuing their interests in Central Asia make attempts to revitalize the opportunities of Silk Road by means of new geopolitical projects. Another issue that arouses interest from world powers is the presence of oil and gas reserves, geo-economic importance of the Caspian Sea. The neighborhood with the volatile areas, the events of 9/11, the subsequent war on terrorism, all this affected the growing importance of the region in terms of security.

Great powers as Russia, China, US, European Union pursue their own interests in the region. In view of this the United States is one of the major players in world politics which can influence current and future international and regional relations. The significance and

dimension of the US interests and consequently the strategies towards Central Asian states always depends on international situation in the region. In this regard we made an attempt to reveal the essence of the US strategy towards Central Asia, its evolution and the factors affecting the formation of foreign policy in Central Asia.

According to the American political tradition the US National Security Strategy is one of the important documents that form the main principles and directions of state's foreign policy. In this regard it is important to mention the evolution and shifting of the US interests towards Central Asian states during last decades.

At the beginning of 90's the US recognized a newly independent states of Central Asia. According to Russian scholar during this period the US was confused with the unexpectedly rapid collapse of the Soviet Union and the lack of understanding of how to build on policy towards the newly independent states. The US had no any consistent and coherent policy towards the countries of the region (Kazantsev, 2012). The policy pursued by the US towards these states was an overall strategy for the post-Soviet states aimed at democratization of political life and for carrying out market reforms. The priority was given to Russian Federation and Central Asian republics were on the far periphery of American attention.

At the first half of 90's the strategy towards Central Asia considered in the context of post-soviet policy. During this period of time the US paid attention mainly to issues as centralized control of nuclear weapons, pressure for rapid arms control treaty implementation and help in reduction of nuclear arsenals that some of these republics possessed (The White House, 1993).

CENTRAL ASIAN DIRECTION OF THE US FOREIGN POLICY DURING CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

President William J. Clinton characterized was known as a domestic policy president and he placed his highest priority on social programs, development of the US economy (Martel, 2015). The key element of Clinton administration's foreign policy was the concept of enlargement that was articulated in 1994 in national security strategy. In national security strategy of Engagement and Enlargement 1994 and 1995 the United States mentioned Kazakhstan in the sense of the issues of combatting the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction. In particular in this document it was mentioned that the US would continue to push for the dismantlement of intercontinental ballistic missiles located in Ukraine and Kazakhstan (The White House, 1994, 1995).

During the presidency of Clinton the Central Asian direction of the US foreign policy was considered primarily through the prism of necessity to several problems. In this regard the high priorities were given to the following problems: filling the geopolitical and economic vacuum in the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union; decoupling Central Asian states from their powerful neighbors as Russia, China and partially from Turkey and Iran, using the economic bargaining chip; solving the issues of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear security as a whole; the incorporation of elements of democracy and a market economy in the political life and the structure of the national economy states.

In order to fulfill the above-mentioned issues US had to participate actively in the region. Hence, the state directly or indirectly was presented in regional affairs. The US rendered assistance financially by loans, investments, humanitarian, scientific and technical development (Sultanov, 2002). In the late 90-s in the US foreign policy indicated by a gradual shift in focus towards the countries of the region. This was caused by a changing geopolitical background in the region and the world. In this regard one of the important factors was the economic interest. During this period the US and other Western companies began their work on the territory on Central Asia. The United States actively supported alternative to Russian energy transportation projects in the region. In particular there were realized several projects as the Baku-Supsa and Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. The US also supported the EU's projects aimed at construction of new transport routes. At the same time, the state spent a lot of efforts to neutralize the Iranian transportation routes of Kazakh oil and Turkmen gas (Kazantsev, 2012).

In 1997 was adopted a national security strategy for a new century. There was mentioned in this document that the US imported the energy resources mainly from the states of Persian Gulf as well as from Canada, Venezuela and Mexico. From this perspective the US didn't need Caspian oil to meet its domestic needs. In this regard the power pursues the political goal of transportation of energy resources by the routes controlled by the country in Eurasia (The White House, 1997). In national security strategy of 1998 Russia, Ukraine and other newly independent states it was highlighted that the evolution, development of market economies and the peaceful transition of these states into international community had a vital interests for the United States. And that a stable and prosperous Caucasus and Central Asia will help promote stability and security from the Mediterranean to China and facilitate rapid development and transport to international markets of the large Caspian oil and gas resources with substantial US commercial participation (The White House, 1998). This was also noticed in the following national security strategy. The US attached a great importance to investment in Caspian energy resources and its export to world markets through the Caucasus (The White House, 1999, 2000).

Bilateral relations in 90's: As to bilateral relations, one of the main factors of the US foreign policy in this region was the establishment of a strategic partnership with Uzbekistan. This state situated in the middle of the region with the largest population and inherited the region's cultural centers considered by the US leaders as the key of the region. Also in this period the Uzbek leaders followed the independent from Russia foreign policy and claimed to the leadership in the region. The US supported the Uzbek position and policy. Thus the relations between two states developed in pro-American and anti-Russian track. The relations with Turkmenistan developed mainly in energy and economic fields. The interests that the US pursued in relations with this state was the construction of Trans-Caspian and Trans-Afghan gas pipelines.

In whole during the Clinton's second administration the US influence increased in the region. So, the first Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were the first Central Asian states which established closed cooperation with this power, later Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in number of issues enlarged this list. Tajikistan in 90's was almost fully developed on Russia. So, the relations of this state with the US remained in large extent "frozen" (Kazantsev, 2012).

CENTRAL ASIAN DIRECTION OF THE US FOREIGN POLICY DURING BUSH ADMINISTRATION

The distinctive feature of the next president George W. Bush's presidency was the overwhelming focus on foreign policy. The events of 9/11 were the pivotal moment in the US towards the Central Asia region but also for the strategy of foreign policy of the state in whole. One year later after terrorist attacks in New York in September 2002 was adopted a new National security strategy. According to this document the key element in struggle in war on terror was the preemption. During the presidency of Bush and for the period of the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan the Central Asian region became one of the principal objects of American interests in the world. Central Asian had geopolitically advantageous location to help to fulfill the American intentions in war. So with the Russian consent the US received for operations in Afghanistan, military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The US also increased.

The US strategy under the presidency of Bush's administration towards Central Asian republics mainly touches upon security dimension. It was extremely important for the US, especially at the initial stage of the anti-terror war in Afghanistan to enlist the support of region's states to focus its human, humanitarian and military resources. In addition, the United States considered Central Asia as a deterrent buffer against the spread of radical ideas-both religious and political.

The US influence in the region began to rise again. In this period the US and Central Asian republics except Turkmenistan made a number of contractual agreements in military-political field. The administration of George W. Bush also sharply increased economic assistance to countries in the region: aid to Uzbekistan in October 2001 has grown three times, sharply increased military assistance to Kazakhstan (Wishnick, 2004).

In 2005-2006 in Washington, a new concept of politics in the Central Asian direction was developed. This concept was suggested by F. Starr an expert in regional affairs. The scholar concluded about the formation of a new region "Greater Central Asia" comprising Afghanistan and Central Asian states. He expressed the view about the need to develop a region-wide policy of the US administration component with respect to these countries. According to Starr (2005), the foundation of a new US policy should be aimed at rapid development of trade and transport links between the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan (Starr, 2005a, b). Thus the US could build on the success in Afghanistan and to ensure the Greater Central Asian states with a margin of safety that allows to confront the

threats posed by radical Islamic groups. By this means the US also could reach the purposes of its grand strategy as the prevention that the region from domination by any state. It is remarkable that before the Central Asian states referred to the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. But at the end of 2005 the political responsibility for these republics transferred to the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.

The national strategy of national security of 2006 was mainly devoted to the burning issues of American foreign policy as the strengthening alliances to defeat global terrorism, the work to prevent terrorist attacks, prevent the US and its alliances from the threatening with the weapons of mass destruction expanding and building the infrastructure of democracy, etc., according to this strategy the priorities in the US foreign policy were given the following regions the Western Hemisphere, Africa, Middle East (Greater Middle East), Europe, Russia, South and Central Asia and East Asia. As to the Central Asia it is highlighted in the document that "South and Central Asia is a region of great strategic importance where American interests and values are engaged as never before" (The White House, 2006).

In April 2006 the US State Department declared that the promotion of "regional economic integration" while ensuring American security interests and support for democratic and market reforms, has become one of the main goals of US policy in Central Asia. The integration in this region aimed at development of "cross-border economic ties". In this regard the US emphasized a new role of Afghanistan as a bridge connecting two regions Central and South Asia. Although the US administration has emphasized that was not seeking to undermine existing relations between the Central Asian states and their traditional trading and strategic partners, in fact, the US has put a large-scale goal to create an alternative integration projects implemented by Russia in the region and to limit the role of China in Central Asia by formation macro-region of South and Central Asia. Consequently the United States by controlling Afghanistan and cooperation with India and Pakistan could have possibly predominant influence (Troitsky, 2011).

Bilateral relations with central asian states: During the Bush presidency Washington's main efforts in the Central Asian direction focused on maintaining political dialogue with Kazakhstan. In 2002, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments on the terms of use the Almaty International Airport as an alternate for the US military aircraft (The White House, 2006). An indicator of changes in the US policy towards

Kazakhstan was the US administration's decision in the face of the Ministry of Commerce of withdrawal from the country the status of Kazakhstan's non-market economy. In 2005, Washington confirmed the policy of maintaining good relations with Astana. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has offered military assistance to Kazakhstan as it was motivated by "on the basis of US national security, despite the many steps backwards in the field of human rights." The US geostrategic goals regarding Kazakhstan during this period were focused on the following: to have a rapid reaction force in region that may be effective on further deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan; to have a regional infrastructure for an active policy with regard to Iran and its nuclear program; to project American military presence on the Caspian energy resources; to present in the emerging Euro-Asian transport hub (Medeubaeva, 2012).

After the closure of the base at Khanabad bilateral relations were almost "frozen". This affected also on the amount US aid to Uzbekistan. In 2002 the US allocated to Uzbekistan 224,14 million dollar and in 2008 the amount of the US budgeted assistance to the state was 38,33 million dollar. It is remarkable that in a breakdown to objectives of the assistance the amount of allocated money sharply decreased but the assistance for Peace and Security issues was on the first place (Nichol, 2013). Also in 2008 alone, under the influence of rethinking the foreign policy priorities by the Uzbek leadership in bilateral relationship began the period of "warming". The same year, after a visit to Tashkent, the head of the Central command of the US armed forces (CENTCOM) William Fallon American military personnel under the command of NATO were allowed to stop on the way to Afghanistan in Uzbekistan (Troitsky, 2011).

In relations between two states one of the main issues touched upon the Manas base. Kyrgyz leadership tried to benefit from this problem as much as possible by requesting to increase the rent one hundred times. Finally in 2006 two states signed an agreement about the rent of the base for 17,6 US dollar per year (Nichol, 2010).

Central asian direction of the u.s. foreign policy during obama administration: In 2009 Barack Obama as a new president of the United States inherited the involvement of the state in two wars in Afghanistan since 2001 and in Iraq since 2003. Obama was also faced the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. So the first priority of a new leader was to rebuild the domestic foundations of American power.

In its foreign policy Obama administration immediately proceeded to rethink priorities and the tools of fulfilment of the policy. It was stated about the intention to move away from the practice the excessive reliance on unilateral action and commonly use "smart

power" "a full range of diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal and cultural tools" to restore undermined alliances and partnerships and work towards more positive image of the US abroad, especially in Islamic world (Clinton, 2009).

In December 2009 the United States formulated he policy objectives towards Central Asian states. The State Department stressed that the US considered Central Asia as one of the foreign policy priorities. In this regard the US intended to "expand cooperation with Central Asian countries aimed at supporting the coalition action in Afghanistan and Pakistan", to ensure "the development and diversification of energy resources in the region and ways and transport," to promote "political liberalization and human rights", to stimulate the formation of "a competitive market economy" countries of Central Asia and to prevent the emergence in the region "failed states" (Krol, 2009).

In July 2011, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during her visit to India articulated a concept of the New Silk Road. The project involves the creation of an infrastructure that connects Central and Asia through Afghanistan and the liberalization of trade between the regions. In particular, she stressed that Central and South Asia regions were connected historically with each other and other states of the continent through the Silk Road. H. Clinton proposed to work on this project together by construction of new railway lines, roads, energy infrastructure, such as the proposed pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India. This means upgrading of border crossing points. This was aimed at removing the bureaucratic barriers and other impediments to the free movement of goods and people (Umarov, 2015).

New Silk Road is a transcontinental trading network, completely covering the Eurasian space which aims to detect the presence of the US economic interests, to approve the success of the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan and prevent a reverse development, thereby realizing the broad US strategic goals.

Economic instruments of this strategy are the American initiative to integrate the region into the global financial and economic processes, the development of trade and transport communications in Central Asia, to promote the agricultural sector as a priority and the use of agricultural policy to combat drug production.

CONCLUSION

The US policy in Central Asia was characterized by constant change. At the very beginning of US Central Asian relations the US considered these states as the backyard of Russia. During this period the US pursued the goals to eliminate the threats as nuclear weapons from

the territories of post-soviet republics. The situation changed after the second Clinton administration. During his presidency the US interests shifted mostly to economic issues. Intensification of oil companies, great amount of investments to energy sector of these republics indicated the strengthening of economic ties between the countries. After the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the US strategy in the region but also in a global level became quite aggressive. After the declaration of war against global terrorism, The Bush administration paid more attention to security issues in the region. In this regard geopolitical situation of Central Asia became more significant. At this particular time the geopolitical concepts as Greater Central Asia was formed. Under Obama administration was articulated New Silk Road project aimed at creating transcontinental trading networks. The suggestion of such kind of projects and concepts means that the US has certain interests and continue to develop strategies towards Central Asia.

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