

the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

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## **US POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA**

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### **Abstract**

The report demonstrates stages of United State`s policy towards Central Asia. As the region has become one of the main actors of today`s world with numbers of reasons, such as its geopolitical significance; possible and planned transport and pipeline routes; the richest natural and human resources. The noticeable stages can be seen due to mentioned importance of the region, and can be divided into certain periods. In this paper, the evolution of the main trends and mechanisms for implementing the strategy of the United States in Central Asia from 1991 until 2005, the primary two stages will be described.

**Key words:** Soviet Union, policy, independence, relationship, hydrocarbon, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), human rights.

### **3. Introduction**

The Central Asian region has become one of the most important geopolitical centers of the modern world. The geopolitical role of the region is determined by its intercontinental importance for trade and other ties between the countries of Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The continent consists of five former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In five countries there are 69 million people with the highest population of Uzbekistan, which equals to 32 million people According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the geopolitical region of Central Asia is a vast territory, occupying about 10% of the territory of the Asian continent, which is located in the central part of Eurasia and has no direct access to the World Ocean. In the west the region of Central Asia borders on Europe, in the east - with Asian countries, in the north - with the Russian Federation, in the south has common borders with the countries of the Muslim world. Historically, there was the Great Silk Road. In modern conditions, the Central Asia region is experiencing an increased interest of the world's leading economies, due to the large reserves of hydrocarbons, gold, copper, uranium and heavy metals, as well as the location of transit and communication routes, and the geo-economic importance of the Caspian Sea.

Central Asia is a crossroads of civilizations. Firstly, the importance of the region of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea is rapidly growing as one of the most quickly developing regions for the production and transportation of global-level hydrocarbons. Secondly, the region of Central Asia is already increasingly becoming a field of a possible clash of interests of world's major players. The largest of them are the USA, Russia and China. The problem of regional security takes on a global character and is of paramount importance. The strategic task for the countries of Central Asia at the present stage is to build new ties in the system of international relations with world powers, such as the USA, Russia, China, Japan, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, as well as Saudi Arabia, South Korea and the countries of the European Union. In each of these bilateral dialogues and across the region, there are four main interrelated elements: energy, economic and political modernization, security and interaction between people.

The US foreign policy in Central Asia went through several stages in its development. And perceptible stages can be divided into certain stages. First period (1991-2001) played key role on implementing ideas of Washington towards them, which starts from sovereignty of five former states of Soviet Union until 9/11 attack. And the policies (2001-2005), which were directed

from September 11, can be classified as the second major stage that had effect on changing core principles and policy of White House towards post-Soviet countries.

During the first period, which lasted from the dissolution of the Soviet Union until the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, U.S. policy focused on three priorities: helping the Central Asian countries attain and defend their newly won sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity against a potential resurgence of Russian neoimperialism; securing the legacy of Soviet weapons of mass destruction; and breaking up Russia's monopoly over pipelines and transit routes for Central Asian oil and gas as a means of ensuring the region's independence from Russia.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the problems of poverty, civil wars and illicit drug trafficking have become enormously aggravated, which has threatened the integrity of the Central Asian countries themselves. After gaining sovereignty, the Central Asian countries at different levels begin to be included in a multi-polar system of International Relations. Immediately after the collapse of the USSR, the United States recognized the five newly formed states of the region and established diplomatic relations with them. In 1992, Congress passed the law "On Freedom Support", whose goal is to bring American legislation into line with the new geopolitical situation of the existence of 15 independent countries. This act contributed to the creation of open markets, the development of democracy and the establishment of civil society, formed mechanisms that stimulated trade, economic cooperation and exchanges in education, and provided financial support for the processes of cessation of arms proliferation and demilitarization. With the help of this law, the US sought to strengthen its national security by preventing the restoration of communism, and directly in Central Asia - to prevent the emergence of religious extremism.

Their efforts were directed, first of all, to promote political and economic reforms, the goal was to provide the Central Asian states with the opportunity to act as independent, sovereign members of the international community, in many respects this was dictated by fears that the disintegration of the Soviet Union could turn out to be a reversible process. Washington in the context of strategic security was the fate of the Soviet nuclear potential deployed in Kazakhstan. And, secondly, the withdrawal of oil and gas resources of the Caspian basin to world markets. A key element of this strategy was the construction of new oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian region to Europe, military assistance on a bilateral basis and within NATO, and the use of assistance programs to destroy the Soviet institutional legacy.

In the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the White House was most worried that Central Asia had a ramified infrastructure for the production and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) - nuclear,

biological and chemical, especially the world's fourth nuclear missile capability in Kazakhstan. The accession of Kazakhstan to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons can be considered a success on the way to solving the nuclear problem. On May 23, 1992, in Lisbon, Kazakhstan signed a protocol to the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms<sup>2</sup>. The removal and dismantlement of those weapons and infrastructure is one of the great achievements of U.S. nonproliferation policy, and America's cooperation with Kazakhstan on non-proliferation remains a key element of the relationship between the two countries. For instance, military ties between the countries of Central Asia and NATO began to emerge within the framework of the Partnership for Peace and developed an extensive program of joint events during the period of 1993-1996<sup>3</sup>.

In the period (1996-2001), new priorities in the US strategy emerged. Thus, the problem of the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian region has risen in full force; a pipeline project has evolved around Russia and Iran, later called the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. The projection of US strategic interests in the Central Asian region was first clearly recorded in April 1997 in a special report sent to Congress by the US Department of State<sup>4</sup>. The document indicated that the United States, as the world's largest consumer of energy, is interested in "expanding and diversifying" the world's energy resources. At this stage, the US actively supported the pipeline project from the Caspian Sea, bypassing Russia and Iran (BTC), which at that time became the main geopolitical plan for Washington in the region. Leading US political analyst Zbigniew Brzezinski saw the success of implementing the US strategy in creating transport routes connecting Central Asia with the largest centers of world economic activity<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, another element of the new strategy was the construction of energy pipelines from the Caspian region to Europe. The goal was also to ensure that the Central Asian countries could act as independent members of the world community. There was a need to lay oil and gas pipelines that would weaken the dependence of the Central Asian states on the transit of energy resources through the territory of Russia. Earlier, the largest producers such as Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan had the opportunity to supply energy only through Russian pipelines that were managed by Gazprom and Transneft. Control over the production and transit of energy carriers provided Moscow with powerful levers of influence on the foreign policy of the Caspian states, which it used to limit the possibilities of their direct interaction with the institutions of the West. Therefore, the US and Central Asian countries were interested in creating alternative ways of transporting oil and gas. The core of this strategy was the creation of a new transit infrastructure; above all, laying pipelines that would weaken the dependence of the Central Asian states on the transit of their energy carriers

through Russia and at the same time open access for them to Europe as new suppliers of hydrocarbons to the European allies of the United States.

One example of the realization of these interests was the agreement concluded in 1993 between the Chevron Corporation and the leadership of Kazakhstan on the formation of Tengizchevroil, a joint venture to develop the Tengiz field<sup>6</sup>. The consortium led by Chevron has been working on the Tengiz oil field since 1993, and Texaco in 1997 joined the already existing consortium of Italian AGIP and British British Gas, which was developing the Karachaganak field. In 2003, oil from the Tengiz field was pumped to the Russian port of Novorossiysk via a private pipeline from the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC). In particular, the US supported the projects of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and the South Caucasus gas pipeline through the Caspian Sea linking Central Asia and Europe, as well as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline project, to which Unocal was engaged, until the civil war in Afghanistan did not destroy its plans<sup>7</sup>. Unocal refused this project in 1998, when relations between Washington and the Taliban government deteriorated and the US Congress intervened, trying to block this deal. As a result, the US government provided loan guarantees and insured risks for BTC, which began to be built in 1999 and was put into operation in 2006<sup>8</sup>.

In relation to the Central Asian countries, Washington had two most important levers for exerting political pressure: The first includes a set of tools from the field of human rights: accusations of their violation, criticism of the authoritarian nature of government, demands to democratize existing regimes, allegations of corruption, etc. The second tool is the provision of financial, economic, military, technical and humanitarian assistance. And a possible third method is to increase the information and propaganda pressure by supporting the activities of various NGOs and opposition movements, expanding broadcasting on the radio “Liberty / Free Europe”, conducting various outreach programs with the help of official structures to increase America's image in public opinion.

**Successes:**

- U.S. support for Central Asian countries has paid off; they have established their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence.
- The United States secured the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Kazakhstan and the dismantlement of the nuclear infrastructure it inherited from the former Soviet Union.
- No single country has established its hegemony over the region. The United States helped the five Central Asian states establish their independence and sovereignty. America fulfilled its promise of partnership at that crucial stage, and these states have been important partners to the United States at critical times

- Russia no longer has a monopoly on the flow of Central Asian oil and gas.

**Failure:**

- The launch of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline did not strengthen the US position: Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan did not even connect to it. The point of view that the US should leave the region, saving tens of billions of dollars, can be considered as Daniel W. Drezner, a foreign policy analyst who in his article "Refusal of the Great Game" basic arguments<sup>9</sup>.

The beginning of the second stage (2001-2005) coincided with the dramatic events of September 11, 2001, when U.S. policy towards Central Asia began to take shape. To be sure, there was continued interest in pursuing the long-term political and economic reform agenda of the previous decade, but military and security considerations became more important factors in U.S. engagement in Central Asia. The United States launched a large-scale struggle against international terrorism in the face of militant Islamic radicals, conducted a military operation in Afghanistan and deployed military bases in several republics of Central Asia within the framework of the anti-terrorist campaign. At this stage, the US initially approved its military-strategic presence in the region, gradually expanding it jointly with NATO. Central Asia changed from an area of peripheral interest to one that commanded a much higher priority in America's strategy, although the region's importance was based primarily on its role as an adjunct to Afghan stabilization efforts. US Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Uzbekistan George Kroll singled out the following priorities of the United States in Central Asia: expanding cooperation with Central Asian countries in order to support the efforts of the international coalition in combating extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan; development and diversification of the region's energy potential; assistance to the process of political liberalization and respect for human rights in the countries of Central Asia; the development of a market economy and the promotion of economic reforms<sup>10</sup>. At the same time, the war begins in Afghanistan, where at that time the Taliban group controlled a large part of the country's territory. The United States initiated the signing of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with a number of Central Asian countries to use their airfields for the US military Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. Within the framework of these programs, on December 11, 2001, a base was opened in Manas in Kyrgyzstan<sup>11</sup>. In 2005, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited Kyrgyzstan to deepen bilateral relations and discuss the further functioning of the Manas base<sup>12</sup>. In the same year, the Government of Tajikistan announced its support for US actions in Afghanistan and the preservation of the right to use its airspace for NATO coalition forces.

The main conclusion about the US strategy in the region is that it is determined primarily by geopolitical factors. Instead of supporting agrarian reform, high-tech development, and increasing humanitarian aid, the White

House had focused on expanding military and political contacts with the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus, which is the core of Washington's cooperation with the countries of these regions. Along with that, another negative factor for Washington was the intensification in Central Asia of other interested powers - Russia and China, which on a bilateral basis and within the framework of multilateral cooperation (SCO) made an attempt to limit US influence in the region. And the events in Kyrgyzstan (the fall of President A.Akaev) and Uzbekistan (the Andijan) in the spring of 2005, the attitude towards the US strategy in the region began to acquire a pronounced negative character both on the part of the republics of the region themselves and on the part of their "senior" partners in the region SCO. It led to raise question of all the SCO members about the terms of stay of Washington bases in the Central Asian countries.

### **Conclusion**

After the collapse of the USSR, the previously closed region for external influence once again became a region where the interests of the world's giant states are intensified. One of such countries is the United States, as the Central Asian region attracts not only with rich raw materials, but also its key position in the heart of the Eurasian continent, which makes it possible to implement new transcontinental transport corridors along the routes West-East, North-South and form a new geopolitical reality of the 21st century.

In mentioned periods U.S Washington was able to significantly improve its economic, political and strategic influence in Central Asia by implementing aims and purpose from different part of the policy. The key elements of their strategy include: the construction of pipelines that help the countries of the region benefit from their natural resources; humanitarian efforts to prevent the disintegration of the social structure; joint efforts to prevent the export of weapons of mass destruction; assistance for economic modernization. As tensions in the region increase due to the activities of terrorist groups in Afghanistan, the United States also provided security assistance.

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