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US Interests in the Post – Soviet Space

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Abstract:

The collapse of the USSR and the emergence of newly independent states in the post-Soviet space brought about new geopolitical metamorphoses, which due to their dimensions cannot avoid researchers' attention. Today the United States remains to be one of the most powerful states in the world. As a rule, it is defined as a superpower, whose foreign policy and more exactly geopolitical and geostrategic interests are present almost everywhere on the globe and have great influence. The post-Soviet space does not make an exception. That's why the analysis of US interests in this zone seems to be worthwhile and arousing great curiosity.

Keywords

USSR, The post-Soviet space, United States, geopolitical, geostrategic

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Following the Soviet Union collapse and as a result of the appearance of newly independent states, the USA outlined the program of spreading out its international interest into the East of Europe and Asia. In the East of Europe one of the interest zones have become the countries of post-Soviet space. “Nobody is trying to surround Russia. In general surrounding is one of the concepts from the 19th century. In fact we try to spread out – we and the others – democracy, that’s liberalization, which results in increasing prosperity throughout the entire space of the former Soviet Union” (Ofițialinii sit posolistva Ucraini). In the article of the fund “Legacy” “The latest changes in Russia and their influence on American-Russian relations” from the 9th of March 2004 (Bjezinskii, 2002:27), the main US interests on the territory of ex-Soviet Union are analyzed and first of all these interests are: war against international terrorism; exploitation of energy resources; reducing strategic threats in Europe, East Asia, the Persian Gulf; defense of the USA, its frontiers and air space; providing stability in the post-Soviet space and democracy progress abroad.

After the 11th of September 2001 these goals have become clearer and more ambitious, which is explained by the situation of the Central Asian countries from the post-Soviet space on the frontiers with countries sermonizing Islamic fundamentalism, first of all; Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. We will study this issue hereafter, when we examine the relations of the USA with the countries of Central Asia. US interests in the countries of the CIS vary between states, respectively US relations with different countries of this region differ. It depends on the political and geographical situation of the states, their economies’ indices, etc. We will try to analyze in depth the Great Power interests in each of the countries from the CIS, also we will attempt to specify the goals the USA is working towards from the list mentioned above.

We would like to start with Ukraine, a country which today constitutes a barrier between the economic region of the European Union and NATO on one side and the Russian Federation on another side. Bilateral diplomatic relations between the USA and Ukraine were established in 1991. The first visit of American President George Bush, Sr. to Ukraine took place then. In 1994 the first official visit of Leonid Kuchma to Washington occurred. The result of the visit was the signing of the Charter of American-Ukrainian partnership, friendship and

cooperation. In 1995 President Bill Clinton made an official visit to Ukraine. In 1996 the relations between two countries reached the level of strategic partnership. This was followed by the creation of Intergovernmental Commission on the cooperation between the countries in order to interact in the fields of national security, foreign policy, trade and investment. The next visit of President Bill Clinton took place on the 4th -7th of April in 2000. In 2005 the newly elected Ukrainian President Victor Iushchenko visited the USA. On this visit he met US President George Bush, Jr. (Ofițialinii sit Evroatlanticeskogo soiuza).

Owing to the fact that its existence as independent state helps to transform Russia's position, Ukraine, a new and important space on the European chess board is a geopolitical center. It is explained by Ukrainian active participation in the NATO program "Partnership for Peace". The program is a model of bilateral cooperation between NATO and countries partners. Thanks to it these countries can develop individual relations with NATO, determining in autonomous way priority directions of cooperation (Dergacev, 1998). In the article 37 of "NATO Strategic Concept" it is mentioned that Ukraine occupies a special place in Euro-Atlantic security and is an important and valuable partner in ensuring stability and providing democratic values (Dughin, 1999:18). From this point of view the opinion of Mackinder is of interest to us. According to the researcher, Anglo-Saxon strategy has always consisted in the necessity of small states' chain controlled by Anglo-Saxons between Germany and Russia (Ofițialinii sit posolistva Republiki). Along with this US policy is oriented towards the creation of favorable situation in NATO neighborhood, namely: towards political stability, human rights respect, drug and human trafficking reduction, etc.

Another state from Central Asia deserving a special attention is Kazakhstan. The sovereignty of this state was recognized by the USA on the 25th of December 1991. On the 26th of December the two countries established diplomatic relations. US embassy in Kazakhstan was opened on the 15th of September 1992. On the 30th of October 1992 Kazakhstan set up its embassy in the USA. Kazakhstan attaches most importance to the relations with the USA, which is one of its dominant economic partners. American investments made mainly in power engineering

constitute 1/3 of the entire foreign investment portfolio in Kazakhstan. It is necessary to mention that this country received the maximum of dividends on its new geopolitical situation arisen after the events of the 11th of September 2001. On the one hand Astana declared its readiness to help the United States in fighting against terrorism. It also is making a significant contribution to the political and economic situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other hand, Kazakhstan unlike Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan did not offer its territory for American military bases. As a consequence it managed to maintain the stability of its relations with Russia.

The guarantee for a successful development in relations between Kazakhstan and the United States may become the absence of anti-American spirit in the mass consciousness of Kazakhstan population. The people are not inclined to see in the USA any threat to their independence and security. On the contrary, the Kazakhs remember that the USA supported Kazakhstan during the first years of their independence through recognizing and concluding agreements on diplomatic missions' exchange. However, a marked deterioration has been lately noticed in the relations between the two states. This may be explained by the fact that the US government sees problems in pushing through reforms aimed at society democratization, first of all in the domain of electoral system and human rights.

The terrorist acts of the 11th of September 2001 in the USA originated a new stage of antagonism between the international community and global extremism. Within the Operation Enduring Freedom (Skakovski, 2010) the relations between the USA and another Central Asian country, Uzbekistan got a special value, inasmuch as the latter became the main US partner in this region. At the time of its statehood formation Uzbekistan has already faced the problem of Islamic extremism. Two terrorist organizations have been acting on the territory of this country: Hizb-ut-tahir and the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan (Ofițialinii sit Soedineniĥ). After the events of the 11th of September political and military relations between the United States and Uzbekistan have been strengthened abruptly. Uzbekistan was the first from Central Asian countries to offer the USA assistance in carrying out the operation in Afghanistan. The arisen international situation was assessed in Tashkent as the chance to improve the status of a key US

partner in Central Asia and to reinforce its pretensions for regional leadership. In October 2001 the USA and Uzbekistan concluded the agreement according to which Americans got the right to use Uzbekistan air space and air bases in Hanabad (Vladimirov, 2003). Hanabad became the largest American military base in Central Asia. In conformity with different estimates the number of servicemen based in Hanabad constitute from 1-1,5 to 5 thousand people (Boiko, 2001:226).

The status of Uzbekistan as a priority country for the United States in this region was ensured in the Declaration about the frameworks of strategic partnership and cooperation signed during the visit of President I. Karimov to the USA in March 2002. The document sets out that the USA will regard with a special concernment any external threat to the Uzbekistan security and territorial integrity (Wishnick, 2002:12-13).

The third strategically important for the US interests ex-Soviet state of Central Asia is Kyrgyzstan. The USA was among the first countries that recognized its independence and established diplomatic relations on the 27th of December 1991. In February 1992 the USA opened the embassy in Bishkek. In May of the same year Kyrgyzstan opened its embassy in Washington (United). Kyrgyzstan, which itself became a target of militants at the end of 1990s acting on its borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, was one that initially supported international efforts to overthrow the regime of the Taliban in Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks on the 11th of September 2001 in the USA. Since 2005 when Kyrgyzstan Tulip Revolution took place its relations with the USA have deteriorated. The Kyrgyzstan government seeks for increasing compensation for the use of the Manas base, situated in 35 kilometers from the capital Bishkek.

The geographical situation of Tajikistan is not less important for US interests either. This Central Asian state forms borders with Afghanistan and China. That's why it may become the best strategic point for fighting international terrorism. Diplomatic relations between Tajikistan and the USA were established on the 14th of February 1992. The US embassy was set up in March 1992. The Tajikistan embassy in the USA started its activity in December 2002 (Aidarkul, 2002:229).

The events of the 11th of September 2001 and the beginning of anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan indicated a new phase in the

development of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. After the 11th of September 2001 Tajikistan offered the United States and other Western countries' Air Force the possibility to use airdromes in Dushanbe and Kuleaba to carry out anti-terrorist operation. In 2002 Tajikistan became a member of NATO program "Partnership for peace".

Another Central Asian country whose location has been of particular interest for the USA is Turkmenistan. This country lies on the boundaries of two Evil States: Afghanistan and Iran and is situated on the shores of the Caspian Sea, which is rich in hydrocarbon resources. Turkmenistan borders on two countries of post-Soviet space: the economic giant of the region Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which is the main geostrategic US partner. After the events of the 11th of September 2001 American policy in Turkmenistan got a new development. Similar to Tajikistan and Kazakhstan Turkmenistan opened its air space for the flights of US aviation and this of coalition forces undertaking humanitarian mission in Afghanistan. In opinion of American experts – Turkmenistan has become one of five Central Asian states, unofficial members of "Enduring Freedom Operation". In 2002 Turkmenistan and the USA signed the agreement on the use of Turkmenistan air space and international airport of Ashkhabad for aircraft refuel by US military aviation transporting humanitarian goods to Afghanistan. This kind of cooperation brings for Turkmenistan public purse from \$8 to \$12 millions (Ofițialinii sit SȘA).

In our days the US Air Force continues to be based in Central Asia. On this subject the US Deputy State Secretary for Europe and Eurasia Elizabeth Johns emphasized at the hearings in the subcommittee on Central Asia and Caucasus of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations: "When Afghani conflict ends we won't leave Central Asia; we want to support the countries of the region in their aspiration to reform their economies and societies likewise they helped us in war against terrorism. These relations are long-lasting".

In connection with military actions end on the territory of Afghanistan, the USA defined its new goals in the countries of Central Eurasia: setting up democratic institutes in countries of this region, implementing market economy reforms, contributing to the development of cooperation, countries' integration into international

community, common policy of security, fighting terrorism and drug trafficking.

It is obvious that US interests on the territory of post-Soviet space have persisted starting from military positioning aimed at fighting international terrorism, criminality and drug trafficking to economic cooperation with the countries of Central Asia, predominantly in the field of power engineering. Between them we can also distinguish clearly the US interest in spreading its national policy, this of liberalism, democracy and market economy relations, as well as the interest in expanding the zone of its national influence.

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