AMERICAN INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIAN REGION DURING 2001-2015: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract

After 9/11, the Central Asian region got Geo-strategic and geopolitical attention to the United States of America. Initially, Russia, China, and the leaders of regional states criticized the attacks and welcomed America in the region. The landlocked region has enormous energy resources and its border attached to Afghanistan, China, Russia, and the Caspian Sea. American policymakers gave special importance to this region. So, America established Airbases to fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and invested billions of dollars in different areas. After social revolutions in the region, the leaders of Central Asia states, Russia and China viewed America as a threat. This article examines American interests in the Central Asian region after announcing the war against terrorism and also investigates the strategic importance of the Central Asian region for America.

Keywords: American Interests, Security Interests, Energy Interests, Political Interests, Central Asian region

Introduction

In the instant consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union, in late 1991 America has quickly identified the states’ independence of new Central Asia. These establishments of diplomatic bindings with the countries of Central Asia were first by any country.¹ Customarily, the region of Central Asia had been under the power of the Soviet Union. Through its fall down, America recognized the prospect of growing its geopolitical power in this region. Still, without any past basis in this region, the existence of the

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U.S was noticed by the states of Central Asia as that of a stranger. This region had immense capability related to energy and was tactically significant, but it was surrounded by land, which set hurdles for the U.S to enter and involve there.

Following the year 1991, support by America in the favor of the Central Asian region had four aspects the support of a democratic system, the formation of open market finances, the funding of peace and collaboration inside and amongst the states of this region, and their assimilation with the superior global society. It was safeguarding the autonomy, sovereignty and territorial reliability of Central Asia was the keystone of the policy adopted by America. The primary safety concern for the U.S in this region throughout the mid-1990s sustained the safeguarding of chemical, biological and nuclear arms of the previous Soviet Union. Creating on the flourishing cooperative threat reduction (CTR) accord with Kazakhstan, the U.S approved a CTR with Uzbekistan about a natural arms study capacity. The U.S paid attention to shielding adjacent to safety hazards that were based over the long term rather than prevarication not in favor of more looming hazards.

Literature Review

Central Asia: A Region of Strategic Importance to America

Post-Soviet Union crumple, in the year 1991, the United States was required to assist the lately sovereign Central Asian countries to build up financially and politically. The initial decade of the sovereignty of Central Asia, the center spotlight of policies, and the main concerns of America had mainly been determined by energy. This spotlight was also described in a geopolitical perspective, zero-sum, with stress on protecting paths of export beside a cautiously built tactical map meant at avoiding Russia and isolating the Islamic Republic of Iran. Throughout the decade of the 1990s, the endorsement of Turkey as a worth of proxy strength of American in the

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2 Michael A. Peterson, China's great game in Central Asia implications to U.S. policy in the region” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey California, September 2005), 49.
5 Strobe Talbott, A Farewell to Flashman.
region was also intended to boost larger geopolitical objects to counter Iran and Russia and agitation for pro-western and secular democratization.  

Dramatic changes came to Central Asia in 2001, following the terrorist hazards in America. These located the area at the front line of the battle next to terrorism, spiritual extremism, and trafficking of arms. As a result of the incident of 9/11, entire Central Asia offered help in one shape or another to the USA and alliance armed in Afghanistan, which resulted that Washington seriously extending its tactical existence in the region of Central Asia. In an expansion that would have appeared not possible a few years before, armed troops of the U.S were positioned at airbases of Uzbek and Kyrgyz. Shortly, numerous other governments around the globe started to revise their attitude about Central Asia as a region of tactical significance. With the richness of gas, oil, and other resources, this region participated as a vital function in such re-examinations.

The combat against the terror had increased the tactical significance of the region of Central Asia in Washington, but it had not led to dramatic changes in the security environment in the region. The American military presence, combined with ensured access to the region’s reserves, defines the strategic significance of countries of Central Asia to the United States and concerns about the county’s stability had been secondary to Bush administration strategists. In the late year 2001 and most of the year 2002, leaders of the America and the Western discussed an enormously regarding the significance of augmented engagement by the regional republics and the requirements for global monetary organizations to effort extra strongly with these states to assist them to manage with the unsettled progress disputes that were brought owing to the crumble of the Soviet Union and sovereignty.

Unquestionably tactical significance of Central Asia in worldwide matters was rising. In the year 2004, Assistant Secretary Craner gave evidence that the Central Asian region has a key tactical significance for the U.S, Beijing, and Moscow differs from the perception of every nation of its tactical benefits. Washington paid attention mainly to the Central Asian region as a significant theater in the combat against terrorism. Besides, it was out looking like a theater where America may contradict a revitalized

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China or Russia, or a position to dull every addition of influence of Iran. At present, the strategic importance of Central Asia was closely linked to its significance to Afghanistan’s security. The security developments in Afghanistan shape the American orientations not just toward Afghanistan, but moreover toward the Central Asian region.

The region of Central Asia played a vital role in America’s Afghan strategy. Amongst the three states from five of Central Asia were attached to Afghanistan by their borders. A firm Afghanistan relies on the sustained help of its neighbor states of Central Asia just as a firm, the wealthy outlook for the states of Central Asia relies on adopting a peaceful environment, steadiness, and wealth back to their instant neighbor Afghanistan. The Central Asian countries were before then had been doing the participation much too global endeavors in Afghanistan. For instance, Kabul had been provided electricity by Uzbekistan which was its core need. The Manas Transit Center Global Airport in Kyrgyzstan was a vital logistical center for transporting the workforce and for refilling activities. Turkmenistan offered civilized help while over-flight permission was provided by Tajikistan. Civilized support was made available by Kazakhstan, and it had declared a new program valued at $50 million to teach students of Afghanistan in the universities of Kazakhstani. And the Northern Distribution Network started to become a crucial way to get the supplies inside Afghanistan for allied powers.

American Interests in the Central Asian region

The Central Asian region had been a seriously significant area for several U.S tactical concerns. Even if the importance of the region for the U.S mounted radically following the terrorist hazards of 9/11, American concerns in the area were surely not a fresh happening. After the USSR’s disintegration in the year 1991, the U.S wanted to assist the recently sovereign states of the Central Asian region to expand equally financially and politically. Following the 9/11 hazards, the region of Central Asia came up as a main center for the U.S as it started its early assaults in the International Combat against Terrorism to depose the Taliban factor in Afghanistan. The U.S was capable to employ its armed and political

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bindings with the states of Central Asia to bring in onward basing for armed forces exercise in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan (with extra entrance to airspace and limited utilization of bases in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) in its war to confront the terror in operation named enduring freedom. Anti-terrorism had turned out to be the vital spotlight of the policy of the U.S in this region, though other objectives still exist as significant; the U.S had ongoing concern and existence in the Central Asian region of a type that it could not have even dreamed of such before”.

Following the collapse of Taliban groups, preventing the hazard of terrorism stayed the main American concern in Central Asia. The significant position of the states of Central Asia participated in offering a passage for humanitarian aid consignments to Afghanistan and in assisting the alliance in making efforts against terrorism. In December 2001, evidence to Senate Sub-Committee17 and in October 2003 in evidence to Congress, the U.S had three sets of concerns associated with the region of Central Asia: 1) safety; 2) energy; 3) financial and political development. In the safety area, the spotlight was on anti-terrorism, non-propagation, and fighting drug trafficking originating from this region. The energy was vital to the U.S, guaranteeing consistent and financially feasible way into worldwide marketplaces and the exercise of energy incomes to endorse maintainable growth. Financial and Political modification spotlighted movement in the direction of open-minded democracy and market-oriented transforms. Since the incident of 9/11 U.S tactical concerns in the Central Asian region had spotlighted anti-terrorism, particularly the removal of the pressure of terrorists and other threatening factions.

America had significant concerns to promote stability, wealth, security, human rights, and financial and political reforms in the Central Asian region. The financial development and democratic political progress of the region can generate a further resilient constancy and more dependable associates for America in dealing with the universal yet serious worldwide challenges, from non-propagation to counter-narcotics to safety of energy.

The enormous energy resources of Central Asian states were vital for global wealth, guaranteeing a variety of sources and transportation ways, while also bringing new financial possibilities in this region itself.\footnote{George A. Krol, “Reevaluating U.S. policy.” 13.}

America’s primary objectives seemed to wean the countries of Central Asia away from the influence of Russia and deny access to China from regional energy resources. In proportion to the statement of Mr. State Steven Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary that institutions like NATO would carry on illustrating the Central Asian nations nearer to America and Europe, while America also supported the countries to expand new synergies and bindings with the southern countries, for instance, Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan.\footnote{Steven Mann, (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs). Assessing Energy and Security Issues in Central Asia. Testimony to U.S. House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, One Hundred ninth Congress 2\textsuperscript{nd} session, (25 July, 2006), 19-27.}

Washington wanted to stop a Russian largely energy domination from shaping in the oil sell with substantial accomplishment, while it had had a lot fewer achievements regarding natural gas. Concurrently, the U.S wanted to segregate Iran from the energy of Central Asia by advising countries to assemble channels that go around Iran and imposing various sanctions upon those countries and organizations that found doing trade with Iran.\footnote{Stephen Blank, U.S. Interests in Central Asia and the Challenges to Them. (Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, March 2007), 4-5.} The U.S sustained support from the governments of Pakistan, China, and India to generate substitutes to the Russian energy-transportation control by making new energy transportation paths such as railroads, shipping lines, and pipelines.

\section*{America’s Security Interests in the Central Asian Region}

The main security interests of the U.S in the Central Asian region were around counterterrorism, nonproliferation, combating drug trafficking, and regional security. The steadiness in the region of Central Asia was of supreme significance and essential national concerns of the U.S”.\footnote{Richard Armitage (Deputy Secretary of State). In Nichols, Jim. “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests.” Congressional Research Service, report for congress, (10 December, 2004), 3.} The thorough Islamic fundamentalism and violence could have destabilized this region. Counterterrorism was the main American concern in the Central Asian region for presence in the region. The 9/11 incident very much distorted the American customary safety notion and its safety plan. The hazard of global terrorism increased to be the mainly vital safety hazard to America and counterterrorism turned out to be the middle American tactical
anxiety. The Central Asian region was an appropriate geographic region to strike global terrorism. Counterterrorism was a long-standing responsibility and the Central Asian region, had not vanished its political and geographical purpose in the American quest of global counterterrorism.\textsuperscript{23}

America was greatly devoted to Afghanistan and its commitment there and in the states of Central Asia was a long-standing effort. The prospect of this region had substantial comportment on the growth of the International War against the Terrorism and generally on American safety concerns in the Central Asian region; the preservation of way into airspace and land in the Centre of Asia; the progress of substitute sources of energy and the furthering of liberty and democratic progress.\textsuperscript{24}

American required, facilitating countries of Central Asia have faced their safety hazards since, with no steadiness and safety, there would have not been any major investment in this region.\textsuperscript{25} The two mainly significant safety hazards in the Central Asian region where Islamic fundamentalist violence and trafficking of drugs. Inherent in serving the Central Asian region addressed both these dangers were endeavoring to augment boundary protection. All the great exterior authorities America, Russia, and China allocated a mutual concern to counter the danger of Islamic fundamentalist violence and combating the trade of drugs. Both SCO and NATO also had a concern in confronting terrorism and the trade of drugs; again, collaboration among both safety organizations to tackle these shared dangers could have been welcomed in the region of Central Asia.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{America’s Energy Interests in the Central Asian Region}

Access to Energy had been a vital concern in Central Asia for the United States to relate to both oil and natural gas. Energy was important to the United States, guaranteeing consistent and reasonably feasible access to worldwide marketplaces and the employment of incomes of energy to encourage maintainable growth. It did not just since it sought to expand its sources of energy, but also because untied access to the huge resources of the energy of the Central Asian region would assist the region to uphold its sovereignty.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{26} MAJ Jonathan Dunn, “Rethinking American Strategy.” 14.
\textsuperscript{27} MAJ Jonathan Dunn, “Rethinking American Strategy.” 4-5.
America maintained a concern in the growth of resources of energy in the region of Central Asia and that lots of other republics mean to American concerns had their interests regarding this region and it developed into apparent that the Central Asian region had the latent to be seriously significant to Washington. America’s major concerns in the Central Asian region had been the endeavor to achieve entrance for American firms to energy investigation, cleansing, and promotion prospects in this region. America looked for augmented growth and diversification of the resources of energy resources of this region and protected pipeline courses that go around Russia. A number of the biggest hydrocarbon deposits in the globe were originated in the region of Central Asia and billions of dollars had already been spent developing the gigantic regional fields.

**America’s Political Interests in the Central Asian Region**

American Interests in the Central Asian region still rotate in the region of the three extensive ideas of financial and political reform, energy, and safety. As far as the fields of financial and political reforms were concerned, America paid attention to democratization and progress towards open market monitors. A key cause for the interests of America associated with Central Asia worries the impending collapse of financial and political growth in this region. On 24, October 1992 the Freedom Support Act was passed by the American Senate that laid the establishment for versatile support of the states of Central Asia. Though its spotlight was on democratization endeavors and developing open marketplaces, it also dealt with safety and humanitarian matters.

American major tactical objectives in Central Asia were to observe the progress of sovereign, elected, and steady republics, dedicated to the type of financial and political reform that was necessary for recent societies and on the course to incorporate and into the global financial system. America had stressed that safeguarding, steadiness, and affluence in the region was connected to financial and democratic reforms, vigorous esteem for the rule of regulation, and human rights. It would have desired to notice

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29 Annette Bohr, *Central Asia: responding to the multi-vectoring game.* (Malaysia: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 113.
31 A. Elizabeth Jones, “U.S.-Central Asian Cooperation.”
34 Lorne W. Craner, “Testimony to the U.S. Commission on Security.”
the expansion of free media, growth of civil society, and political pluralism. These objectives could be attained via a changeover to democratic ethics and open marketplace progress in every state of Central Asia.

**Research Methodology**

This study used the qualitative method and examined the relevant data. The study also considered secondary sources such as research papers, books, think tank reports and electronic sources, and primary documents such as high official interviews, policy reports.

**Findings and Discussions**

It finds that America quickly established diplomatic relations with all autonomous Central Asian states after the fall of the Soviet Union. It also analyzes that America wanted to increase its influence through Turkey and other Muslim Countries coming out of this region from Russia, but it failed in this, and the regional states went to the Russian orbit. The main reason behind this is the Central Asian region is a landlocked area where is no direct connection and the regional states are dependent on neighboring states especially Russia and China.

It observes that America wanted to safeguard or remove the nuclear and biological weapons from the Central Asian states, just after their independence, as there had been some nuclear testing sites in that region. America has started a program against it and aided millions of dollars under this program and, Russia and regional states also cooperated with it. This study investigates that the Central Asia region and the United States have much to benefit from each other. The United States has much to gain from the partnership with this region, as does Central Asia with the United States. The United States has many economic benefits from the cooperation of the Central Asia region, but it goes much deeper than that.

It investigates that the Central Asian states are rich with natural resources, especially with oil and gas in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. For this purpose, these states are fully dependent on Russia, their energy structure was established during the Soviet era. It also finds that America supported those projects such as Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) and the trans-Caspian gas pipeline, which were bypassing Russia but due to several reasons these projects could not complete. It also finds that America was unsuccessful in non-Russian energy pipelines from Central Asia and its main objective was preventing the regional states away from Russian influence.

It observes that America could not break the Russian monopoly in the Central Asian region. Russia declared this region as its backyard and since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Russian focus has been increased especially during the Putin era. After these attacks, the Central Asian region got significance for regional and global powers. The leaders of Central
Asian states, Russia and China welcomed and supported American terrorist operations and gave access to American humanitarian operations to Afghanistan. Therefore, America established military bases, and this was a golden opportunity for Americans in this region.

It finds that America has been impatient to the point that it committed a strategic error. When America has been supporting the Color Revolution (the events in Andijan and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, sharply raised American intervention in the internal affairs of the country) to change the political framework in Central Asian nations, and it advanced democratization in the district in an excessively incredible way. Actualities have demonstrated that the Color Revolution model is not appropriate for this region. The leaders of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan had strongly resisted political change and have successfully adopted internal political mechanisms with varying styles to stay in power.

This examination shows that Russia and China have kept up the impact to keep the norm, meanwhile it is the best ensure of their survival. Any idea of the democratization of these nations can come just from the West. On the off chance that it does, it will bring the administrations of Central Asian nations much closer to Russia and China. American rejection from Uzbekistan resembled a geopolitical triumph. Because of the color revolutions, they attained wide concurrence on the need for administration security and the need to breakpoint the long-haul military existence of America in Central Asia. These are additionally two key ranges characterizing the political way of Central Asian republics and securing a vital place in the area where the United States ends up in rivalry with Russia and China.

The research explains that the CSTO and the SCO seek to protect the regional status quo. These organizations do not necessarily pose a threat to American interests in this region. But it has the potential to be an anti-American bloc.

This study examines that American influence has been declining in Central Asia. The primary reason was the American strategies and actions in the area; second, China and Russia took America as a threat and try to reduce American influence in the region; third, political unrest in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. America should reexamine its policies in the last three decades and why those policies were not fruitful? To date, and in almost every administration, America has neglected to attain a key destination in Central Asia.

It observes that America could not be far away from regional energy resources and trade from Iran. Iran and China expect that America did not only focus on operations against militants but its military vicinity and security also engage in the range that has a dual reason for regulation and encirclement.
It finds that America’s main interests in the Central Asian region; were security, energy, and political and economic developments. American security interests in Central Asia were the war against terrorism, the fight against drug trafficking and nonproliferation, and the focus on regional stability and safety. Its energy-related interests are investments in energy projects, managing energy resources, and it’s export to the world market. American economic and political related interests have consisted of; promoting pro-western and secular democratization, encouraging the free media, supporting civil society, sponsoring human rights, reforms in political and economic institutions. It finds that there were not any prominent relations between NATO and regional organizations (SCO, CSTO, and EUAEU) to achieve its regional interests and objectives.

Conclusion

Following the 9/11 attacks, the region of Central Asia came up as a center for American foreign policy as it started its early assaults in international combat against terrorism to depose the Taliban factor in Afghanistan. The significant position of the states of Central Asia participated in offering a passage for humanitarian aid consignments to Afghanistan and in assisting the alliance in making efforts against terrorism. The region had been a seriously significant area for several American tactical concerns. This region had immense capability related to energy and was purposefully significant, but it was surrounded by land, which set hurdles for America to enter and involve there. America had three sets of interests associated with the region of Central Asia: 1) safety; 2) energy; 3) financial and political development. America’s primary objective seemed to wean the countries of Central Asia away from the influence of Russia. After the tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan and events in Andijan, Uzbekistan, the United States didn’t maintain its position and couldn’t achieve its objectives in the Central Asian region.

Recommendations

In the light of research, analysis this study has the following recommendations:

- Any regional or global power cannot categorically control the Central Asian region and solved its issues alone, it is recommended that the United States should take steps for confidence-building measures for the regional powers; however, it could achieve its goals in this region.
- It has been found that Russia has established its dominance on energy resources in Central Asia and the regional states’ economy; therefore, it is recommended that America continues to encourage the Indian, Chinese and Pakistani Governments and creates
alternatives to the Russian energy transit monopoly by establishing new energy transit routes.

- It evaluates that America has been supported and encouraged civil societies, NGO’s and media outlets, in a result, Central Asian states such as Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan faced political unrest, after these regional states have concerns about chaos or regime change. So in the light of research analysis, it is recommended that America should support democratic values and civil societies; it must find a way without triggering fear of regime change among the authoritarian leaders.

- It has been observed that none of the American Presidents visited the Central Asia states after their independence till now; the study recommended that America should upgrade the series of high-level visits by the President and cabinet members; to build better relations with the Central Asian states.

- It has also been found that there is a competition of power among America, Russia, and China in the region; Russia and China desire to limit American influence in Central Asia. America should not square off against China and Russia simultaneously; as some areas of China and Russia are in rivalry with each other, especially in the energy domain, it is better to revisit the American policies regarding this region.

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