

US GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS AND REGIONAL SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Assel Zholbarysova*

DOI: 10.24193/subbeuropaea.2018.2.13

Published Online : 2018-12-31

Published Print : 2018-12-31

Abstract

This article is aimed at developing and analyzing the strategic concerns of the main geopolitical powers in the Central Asian region. The author concludes that the specialty of the Central Asia is a beneficial geopolitical location and great amount of nature resources that makes the region an object of world powers' geopolitical interests. The main actors in the Central Asia are Russia, China and the USA. They have an influence on political processes inside of the region, realizing their own strategies.

Keywords: Central Asia, Russia, the USA, China, geo-politics, geo-strategy.

As the famous Kazakh researcher Murat Laumulin notes, "The geopolitics and geo-strategy of the United States of America are truly global in nature and affect virtually on all the regions, on any state on the planet. The region of Central Asia is not an exception. In general, American

* Assel Zholbarysova is PhD candidate, Faculty of European Studies, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, on the field of Political Science, with focus on the geopolitical interests of USA in Central Asian region. She holds Bachelor degree in International Relations (2009-2013) and a Master at the same specialty (2013-2015) from the Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan. Contact: asel__92@mail.ru

policy in Central Asia is part of a more general Eurasian strategy of the United States, affecting the Caspian and Caucasus regions, Russia, Afghanistan, the Middle East, South Asia and China in addition to the Central Asian region"¹.

The main factors influencing the implementation of the US foreign policy strategy in the Central Asian region are considered, namely "the Eurasian strategy as part of the US global strategy aimed at preserving the United States' dominance in the world as a geopolitical force was characterized and will be characterized by the following consecutive steps. These include the consolidation in the Caucasus and the Caspian region, the inclusion of Georgia and Azerbaijan in NATO, the withdrawal of Armenia from under Russian influence; completion of the BTC project. With regard to the implementation of the strategy in 2004-2006 there was an increase in pressure on Iran, there were attempts to replace the existing regime; expansion of the military-political presence in Central Asia.

The main competitors for Central Asia are traditionally considered to be the three world powers: China, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. Each of the three states is interested in consolidating their presence in the region and reducing the level of influence of competitors.

The main feature of the region is significant raw materials. Central Asian countries produce gold, precious, non-ferrous, rare-earth metals, hydrocarbons, etc. Thus, the explored reserves of gas in Central Asia make up about 7% of all the explored reserves in the world and oil is 2.7%. In Kazakhstan, about 25% of the world's uranium reserves are located and 8% of the world's production is produced, which places Kazakhstan at the 4th place in the world for uranium mining. At the same time, Uzbekistan is on the fifth. In addition, Uzbekistan ranks second in the world in export of cotton fiber and 6th in its production².

US policy in Central Asia is one of the parts of a more general US strategy called the Eurasian one, which, in addition to the Central Asian region, also includes the Caspian and Caucasus regions of Russia,

¹ Murat Laumulin, "Central Asia and the West: New Geopolitical Realities" in *Kazakhstan in Global Processes* no. 2, 2004, p. 96-97.

² G. K. Iskakova, "Regional Security in Central Asia and the Strategy of Russia, the United States and China" in *PolitBook* no. 4, 2014, p. 11.

Afghanistan, China, South Asia and the Middle East. In even more general terms, this Eurasian strategy is an integral part of the US global strategy aimed at preserving America's dominance in the global financial and economic systems, expanding US geopolitical influence, consolidating military superiority, controlling the Islamic world (through combating "international terrorism") and also containment of potential competitors in the person of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

In 2005, a geopolitical project called "Greater Central Asia"³ was presented in the United States, according to which Washington intended to form a unified military-strategic space consisting of the Central Asian and Afghanistan, later to join the GCA with such a project "The Great Middle East". The goal of the GCA project was the withdrawal of the region from the influence of the Russian Federation and China, as well as the accession of Afghanistan to the region, which would allow the country to move closer to more democratic and stable states of Central Asia, as well as to protect it from the negative influence of Pakistan and Iran.

In the activity of the USA in Central Asia in the framework of the "Greater Central Asia" project, the following activities are in priority: promoting the development of regional trade, transport infrastructure in the region, energy; the region's entry into the world financial structures under the auspices of the West led by the United States; transformation of the GCA into an important transport hub for the transit of raw materials and goods; promoting the development of the agrarian sector of the economy at the expense of industrial development.

There is an opinion that one of the factors of the US presence in the region is the need to overcome OPEC's monopoly in oil pricing, the creation of the so-called free oil market and the increasing importance of US oil companies. At the same time, the transportation of Caspian hydrocarbons to the United States is a costly project and therefore unprofitable, but US companies are successfully transporting Caspian oil to Europe⁴.

³ Frederick Starr, *In Defense of Greater Central Asia*, U.S.A., Washington, D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program – A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, September 2008, p. 3.

⁴ Murat Laumulin, "US Strategy and Policy in Central Asia" in *Central Asia and the Caucasus* no. 4(52), 2007, p. 60.

After 2014, the United States of America introduced a new strategy for the development of the region "New Silk Road", involving the unification of Afghanistan and the states of Central Asia with the more economically developed states of South Asia⁵. At the same time, participation in the process of Russia, China and Iran is as limited as possible. The project involves the formation of a transport corridor from Southeast Asia to Europe bypassing Russia, completely excluding participation in it both the Northern Sea Route and the Trans-Siberian Railway. Thus, according to the authors of the project, Russia and China will for several decades fall out of the process of rapprochement with the Central Asian states. However, experts believe that such an idea is unrealizable, since even from a geographical point of view, the region is forced to contact and develop economic ties with its closest neighbors such as Russia and China⁶.

In addition, there is a point of view according to which the US is generally more rational to leave the region, which will save considerable financial resources. Researcher Daniel V. Drezner relies on the fact that, firstly, already implemented projects such as the launching of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline did not strengthen the US position in Central Asia, one power in the region can't be fully hegemony in the region and the region is significantly remote geographically⁷.

Nevertheless, the US is not in a hurry to leave Central Asia, moreover, Washington is taking a number of efforts to consolidate its position in the region and prevent the transition of Central Asia to the monopoly influence of Russia or China.

From a geopolitical point of view, Russia's strategic orientation toward military-strategic cooperation with the West and the constant containment of Russia's geopolitical ambitions are important elements of the US strategy in Eurasia; the beginning of the formation of a strategic partnership with India; deterrence of China as a geopolitical force, the

⁵ Younkyoo Kim, Fabio Indeo, "The new great game in Central Asia post 2014: The US "New Silk Road" strategy and Sino-Russian rivalry" in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 46 (2), June 2013, pp. 275-286.

⁶ N. Mozgovaya, *United States can't forget about Central Asia after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan*, [<http://www.golosameriki.ru/a/csis-mankoff/1598062.html>].

⁷ V.N. Zemskov, "The US strategy in Central Asia" in *Bulletin of MGIMO University* no. 2(29), 2013, p. 31.

beginning of confrontation with the PRC on a geopolitical scale (2010-2020)"⁸.

Western interests also depend on how active the other two largest powers are in the neighborhood such as Russia and China. There are indications that both countries have drawn their attention to the region, which can be judged from their obvious (in the case of Russia's veiled) economic introduction to Kazakhstan, as well as regional initiatives, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the presentation in 2005 of a new pipeline to the west of China and the 5 + 1 initiative put forward by Japan⁹.

In 1997, the highest state official in the administration of B. Clinton, Deputy Secretary of State S. Talbot made a policy statement on American policy towards Central Asia. He made it clear that America does not seek domination in this region; its goal is to prevent others from establishing domination or fighting for influence¹⁰.

On the current state of geopolitical interests and priorities of the main players in the region, we can talk about the basis of the results of an expert poll. The analysis showed that USA interests and actions to develop energy resources in the region, in contrast to Russia and China, prevail over other problems. At the same time, experts believe that security issues in Central Asia are not a priority for the United States for some reasons.

First, the geographical factor plays a role here, remoteness of the region from the American continent.

Secondly, the expectations of the Central Asian countries that the United States will take up the problem of the region, after the events of September 11, 2001, were not realized, since the USA were occupied with other international problems related to the Iraq war, with nuclear issues in Iran and North Korea and disagreements with their European allies over Iraq.

⁸ Murat Laumulin, "Central Asia in a Foreign Political Science and World Geopolitics, Foreign Policy and Strategy of the United States at the Present Stage and Central Asia, Almaty: KISI under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Vol. 2, 2006, pp. 197-198.

⁹ "Kazakhstan: Dialogue with the West" in G. Manyatis and A. Alimzhanov (ed.), Almaty: PF "Perspective", 2005, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰ E. Rumer, "USA and Central Asia after September 11" in *Russia and the Muslim world*, no. 11 (137), 2003, pp. 93-95.

US analysts suggest changing the US strategy in the Central Asian region on the basis that growing anti-American sentiments are one of the reasons for the revision of current American public diplomacy towards Central Asia. According to the latest recommendations, the US should continue the geopolitical separation of the Central Asian region from the Caucasus. Central Asia is closer to the Middle East and South-East Asia and the Caucasus is closer to Europe. Further, the US must go beyond the view that the Caspian is a critical point for ensuring the security of Eurasia. Caspian resources are important only for the energy market.

Another promising area of American foreign policy in the region is the development of nationally oriented civil societies in Central Asia. According to most analysts, the US should support the protection of human rights and other aspects that can resonate with public opinion. This, in turn, will allow for some time to create the basis for political movements capable of acting as a functional opposition to the ruling regimes.

In the implementation of their strategy, the US is encountering resistance from both the states of the region, protesting for natural reasons, outside pressure on their own internal competence and external actors – primarily Russia, China and to some extent, the European Union.

To realize its strategic and geopolitical goals, the United States uses methods and tools that are not new, but nevertheless are considered to be effective by the White House. These include economic assistance, ideological pressure and in special cases, special operations, political provocations and sabotage: the artificial organization of political crises, support and financing of opposition and etc.

In relation to the states of Central Asia, the US uses such important levers to exert political pressure as accusations of human rights violations, criticism of the authoritarian nature of local regimes, demands to democratize existing regimes, allegations of corruption; rendering or cutting financial, economic, military, technical and humanitarian assistance.

At the same time, as a universal instrument for implementing such a policy in the post-Soviet space, the military-political leadership of the alliance began actively using the mechanisms for the development of international military cooperation within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program, which NATO has been implementing since

January 1994¹¹. Officially, the PFP aims to expand and intensify political and military cooperation, increase stability, reduce the threat to peace and strengthen relations by creating an atmosphere of commitment to practical cooperation and the democratic principles of the North Atlantic alliance¹².

Under the PFP, the partner countries, participating in specific programs, cooperate with NATO on several levels, consistently increasing their integration with NATO structures. These programs include: The Individual Partnership Program (IPP), which provides for a wide range of activities for which the Partner State wishes to build relations with NATO; The Program for Process Planning and Analysis (PARP), which assesses the compliance of the defense sphere partner state to NATO standards. In parallel, the structures of the national Armed Forces create peacekeeping units that participate, including in NATO operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; The Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), which covers specific activities for the integration of the Partner State into NATO. For Partners States that intend to deepen relations with NATO, a Cooperative Action Plan for the Establishment of Defense Institutions (PAP-DIB) is also being developed, within which concrete defense reforms are proposed¹³.

The development of cooperation within the PFP allows solving the problem of access of American troops to the regional theaters of military operations, so necessary for conducting current future operations. In addition, the military exercises under the auspices of the partnership will facilitate the transfer of the armed forces and the countries that have joined it to NATO standards which will strengthen the potential for joint military action by the United States and its allies.

US researcher E. Rumer notes: "After September 11, the United States assumed the role of the leading power and "security manager" of Central Asia. After 10 years of conscious distancing from its problems, there are all signs of a long-term US military presence in the region. The regimes of the Central Asian states undoubtedly benefited from the

¹¹ Philip H. Gordon, *NATO's Transformation: The Changing Shape of the Atlantic Alliance*, Boston: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997, p. 94.

¹² Murat Laumulin, Fatima Kukeeva, *The foreign policy strategy of the Obama administration and US policy in the post-Soviet space*, Textbook. Allowance, Almaty: KazNU, 2012, p. 122.

¹³ Ingo Peters, *New Security Challenges: the Adaptations of International Institutions ...*, Munster: Lit Verlag, 2016, p. 147.

appearance of Americans. The situation changed with the emergence of Americans in Central Asia, displacing both Russia and China from the positions of the dominant powers in the region and providing the Central Asian leaders with room for maneuver in relation to Moscow and Beijing”.

By 2006 the period of unstable balance of forces that had been established since the end of 2001 when after the launch of the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan, the United States, Russia, China, to some extent Iran and the EU countries agreed on the delimitation of spheres of influence and responsibility in the Central Asian region. These arrangements were largely closed. They were based on the fact that the US presence in Central Asia after the events of September 2001 became a reality. For the interests of Russia and China it was extremely important to limit the ability of the USA to expand its presence and influence. In fact, at the end of 2001, the USA very effectively implemented the first stage of political implementation in Russia's zone of responsibility in Central Asia which directly affected the interests of China and Iran.

However, both in Afghanistan and among the newly independent states of Central Asia the US presence did not translate into political influence mainly because of the need to negotiate with Iran and Russia in Afghanistan and Russia in Central Asia. Accordingly, the US ability to influence the situation in the region and manage it was very limited, which did not meet the strategic interests of Washington for which the control over Central Asia was necessary to exert pressure simultaneously on China and Russia at the points most vulnerable to them.

The opinion on this question is expressed by professor of political science of George Mason University (USA) M. Katz: “Obviously, great powers have their own both competing and common interests in the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan). America, Russia and China are competing against each other in the struggle for oil and pipelines from Central Asia. Cooperation between the four great powers on the problem of oil and pipeline routes from Central Asia is at the minimum level. However, they jointly oppose the growth of Islamic extremism in Central Asia. Each individual state

must recognize that others also have legitimate interests in the region, and therefore all must take these circumstances into account"¹⁴.

That is, not only when the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia agree, the economic interests and security of the great powers depend on Russia, China, the USA and Europe and also depend on the position of other states. However, the solution of common problems through closer integration with great difficulty is making its way. The region continues to accumulate dangerous conflict potential and the statements of the ruling circles on joint struggle against threats and challenges are mostly declarative¹⁵.

Multifaceted cooperation of the USA with the countries of the region is an important factor for the development of Central Asia and ensuring regional security, including in the field of countering contemporary threats and challenges. Washington, in cooperation with various international financial organizations, not only supports the efforts of the Central Asian states in the field of regional integration, but also acts as the initiator of various programs to deepen regional cooperation in trade, transport and energy¹⁶.

At the same time, Central Asian countries are close to major hotbeds of tension and are experiencing a destabilizing influence from outside as well as from within - from extremist groups that hide behind the flag of Islamic fundamentalism. It is also significant that Pakistan and India, possessing nuclear weapons, have been in a state of confrontation for several decades. In a complex relationship with the USA, Israel and some other countries are neighboring Iran. In China, it is necessary to note the actions of the separatists: The Uighur Islamic Movement of East Turkestan is included in the list of terrorist organizations in August 28, 2002. In Tajikistan the consequences of the war remain with the forces of the armed opposition of the Islamic sense who keep in touch with the leadership of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and terrorist Al-Qaida organizations

¹⁴ M. N. Katz, "Russian-Iranian Relations: Functional Dysfunction" in *Mideast Monitor*, Vol. 4 (1).

¹⁵ S. Isabaeva, "The Central Asian Pie" in *Focus*, 13 May 2009, p. 9.

¹⁶ M. Ashimbayev, "Cooperation with the US and the national interests of Kazakhstan" in M. Ashimbayev (ed.), *Kazakhstan and the USA: the state and prospects of bilateral cooperation*, Almaty, 2006, p.7.

and the World Jihad Front. There remains the threat of instability on the part of Afghanistan and drug trafficking from its territory¹⁷.

In general, Central Asia is a politically an unstable region. At present, the interests of independent states in the region are often mutually exclusive. Central Asia is a knot of contradictions, in which problems in various spheres are sharply intertwined: disputes over water resources, many latent conflicts, political turbulence, ethnic and interstate contradictions. The high conflict of the region is expressed in the fact that an aggravation of one problem can pull the aggravation of the remaining problems listed above.

The origins of modern problems lie in the following reasons:

- Uneven distribution of water resources (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are rich in water resources and dependent countries are Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan);

- Low level of economic interaction between the countries of the region;

- Rivalry for regional leadership between two largest states of the region (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan).

The main threats for the region are:

- Drug trafficking;

- The unstable situation in Afghanistan;

- Terrorist threats;

- Growth of Islamization;

- Socio-economic instability;

- The lack of a coherent policy on the part of Russia¹⁸.

Thus, if all these factors are exacerbated, which represent a significant threat to regional security in the region; it is difficult to avoid any negative consequences.

Researcher R. Burnashev identified in the security system of Central Asia a "global level", consisting of global forces (Global level power),

¹⁷ I. Prokofiev, "On the balance of geopolitical interests in Central Asia" in M. Ashimbayev and J. Mennuti (ed.), *Cooperation of Central Asian countries and the USA on ensuring security in the region*, Almaty: IMEP, 2005, pp. 34-36.

¹⁸ "Forecast by scenario of the development of situation in Central Asia after the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan", 2014-2024, [http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=1870#top], 27 May 2013.

which due to the peculiarities of the modern system of international relations can play a significant role in Central Asia. These include the US and the European Union. Although their involvement in sub-regional processes is small, they create favorable or unfavorable external conditions for the sub-region and influence the formation of its internal structure.

Another “internal level” of security in Central Asia, defined by the fact that Central Asia, as a sub-region of weak states and authorities, leaves space for the actions of actors of a non-state type, shaping the dynamics of security at non-state levels and leaves the sub-region relatively open to external forces. Since the ability of the states of the sub-region to interact and enter into classical interstate rivalry is low and limited, security problems in the sub-region are more transnational than interstate. Of the “essential structures” of the regional security complex (deep structure of anarchy / hierarchy, polarity, amity / enmity pattern and boundaries), none was formed¹⁹.

In this regard, the results of the expert study on the question of the degree of influence of the United States of America on strengthening the national security of the countries of Central Asia have presented the following answers at the present stage.

The expert concludes, “Actions of the USA did not lead to the formation of an independent regional security complex in Central Asia, but an isolating education with the political and economic presence of the United States. Only if the United States significantly strengthens its presence in the sub-region can a scenario open in which Central Asia becomes the arena of a mixture of interregional and global rivalry”.

One of the most important spheres of interaction between the countries of Central Asia and the United States was the post-conflict arrangement of Afghanistan. According to American analysts, since it has always been beneficial for the Central Asian states to maintain balanced relations with major powers, they should be vitally interested in the success of American policy in this country.

In turn, the States are vitally interested in attracting the states of the region as economic partners and sponsors of Afghanistan. At the same

¹⁹ R. Burnashev, *Dynamics of the US presence in Central Asia: situation analysis based on the theory of a set of regional problems. US Policy in Central Asia*, Almaty: Central Asian Agency for Policy Studies, Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Kazakhstan, 2003, pp.57-58.

time, the United States is making a big bet on expanding regional cooperation (with the mandatory participation of Kabul).

During the consultations, American politicians and experts expressed concern over China's activation in Central Asia, in particular, the transition of Beijing's "excessive" economic influence to the political one. A certain alarm is caused by their "return" to Russia and Russian business in Central Asia. In this regard, the US is interested in ensuring that the activities of the SCO, which includes both the PRC and Russia, do not go beyond purely economic projects. In extremely acute form, Americans are beginning to say that the States in one form or another could take part in the activities of this organization.

In this regard, America's main task is to prevent the entry of its strategic adversary and rival - Iran into the ranks of this structure. Experts from Kazakhstan drew attention to the need to establish a full-fledged strategic dialogue between various international organizations (including the SCO and NATO, CSTO and NATO, the SCO and the OSCE and so on) in the sphere of ensuring regional security.

Not always the certain position of the USA concerning the region is partly due to the presence of two differently directed trends in the American political establishment and expert community. One part of politicians and experts is inclined to perceive Central Asia as a single region. The other, on the contrary, emphasizes the need for a differentiated approach. The result of this confrontation was an inconsistent policy, according to some political scientists. Near the end of the reign of the second administration of George W. Bush many specialists allowed themselves to speak even about America's "absence" in Central Asia²⁰.

During the Obama administration, the US retained considerable potential for intervention in the geopolitics of Eurasia. This concerns the continuing occupation of Afghanistan, shifting the center of gravity of military operations to Pakistan, threatening Iran, conducting subversive operations in the XUAR (Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region) of the PRC (as was the case in the summer of 2010), attempts to re-destabilize the post-

²⁰ M.E., Shaikhutdinov, Murat Laumulin, "On the Potomac and the Hudson" in *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 15 May 2008, p. 5.

Soviet space by resuscitating the policy of “color revolutions”. All these factors directly affect the security and stability of Central Asia²¹.

In the long term, the transformation of the PRC into a regional power can have different effects on the US economy and security. Our two countries depend heavily on peace and stability in East Asia and are therefore interested in establishing joint bilateral relations. However, China must accompany the growth of its military power with greater openness in strategic intentions, in order to prevent friction in the APR²².

In 2011, there was an incident with the attack by an American plane of Pakistani military which led to the termination through Pakistan of cargo transit for the troops of the international coalition in Afghanistan and put the latter in an extremely difficult situation. As a result, the US and its allies began to negotiate with the states of Central Asia and Russia on the so-called Northern Route of Transportation. Naturally, in this connection, not only was the impression emerged of a certain dependence of the West on Russia as a key country in ensuring the transit of cargo for their troops, but also confirmed the idea of the inevitable withdrawal of Western troops from Afghanistan²³.

Therefore, Russia did its best to have reliable positions in Central Asia. It has strengthened its influence in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Attention should be drawn to the adoption in this organization in 2011 of the decision that the deployment of foreign bases can only be carried out with the general agreement of the participating countries.

In the organization, the forces of rapid collective response to internal political crises in these countries were created. Tashkent with great

²¹ George D. Schwab, Michael Rywkin, “Security and stability in Central Asia: differing interests and perspectives” in *Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, [<http://kisi.kz/en/categories/geopolitics-and-international-affairs/posts/security-and-stability-in-central-asia-differing-intere>].

²² “Preserving of Global Leadership in the USA: Priorities for the Armed Forces in the XXI Century: A New Survey of US Defense Strategy”, [http://pentagonus.ru/publ/2012_g/sokhranenie_globalnogo_liderstva_ssha_priortety_dlja_vooruzhjonnykh_sil_v_xxi_veke_2012_oficialnye_dokumenty/130-1-0-22200], 12 December 2016.

²³ S. Akimbekov, “The eternal struggle for Central Asia” in *the Center of Asia* no. 13-16, 2012, pp. 37-38.

reluctance at the time subscribed to these decisions, adopted after the events in Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2010²⁴.

At present, for the realization of Washington's strategic interests, American experts call the course toward cooperation with Moscow in Central Asia, as well as the rejection of the previous US strategy aimed at isolating or ousting Russia from the region; support of the idea of the Central Asian "round table", i.e. dialogue at the highest level between the states of the region and their neighbors - the PRC, Russia, Turkey and Iran. In the field of energy policy, according to experts, the United States should not concentrate exclusively on known oil and gas transportation routes, support Russian and international projects, including those that can link the region to East Asia.

American long-term strategic interests in the Central Asian region are as follows:

- 1) Promoting the stabilization of the region through its democratization and involvement in the globalization process;
- 2) Preventing the acquisition of a "controlling stake" of political influence by any other power (Russia and China).

Destabilization, according to Washington, may have the following structure or components:

- 1) The threat of Iran's nuclear program;
- 2) The risk of socio-political destabilization of Pakistan and Afghanistan;
- 3) Escalation in the zone of the Indo-Pakistani conflict;
- 4) Non-participation of the United States in determining the status and distribution of resources of the Caspian Sea;
- 5) Greater involvement of Central Asia in the orbit of transnational terrorist groups and the transformation of the region into a base for extremist Islamist forces;
- 6) Increasing new challenges and threats (drug trafficking, illegal migration);

²⁴ "Obama is betting on Afghanistan",

[http://rus.ru/radio_broadcast/no_program/79945816/], 2 December 2009.

- 7) Proliferation of WMD (weapons of mass destruction) and lack of control over uranium ore reserves and available nuclear technologies.

Washington experts point to possible US roles that they could play in Central Asia:

- 1) A limited partner;
- 2) A hegemon;
- 3) A security manager.

They are inclined to believe that at present the USA should choose the role of a “security manager”, avoid becoming a hegemon and build its own policy taking into account the interests of Russia, China and Iran.

At the same time, the USA is unlikely to become the only dominant force in Central Asia: there are no prerequisites for this to happen. Real goals are energy security, proximity to the main focus with terrorism (Afghanistan and Pakistan), combating drug trafficking, arms and WMD (weapons of mass destruction) production technologies, promoting transparency in social and economic development - all this requires firm commitments. In addition, complex Russian-American relations can, at least in the short term, block US policy in this region.

Thus, since the United States pursues a global policy and is considered to be the main geopolitical player in Central Asia, they undoubtedly have their own interests in the region, which directly depend on the actions of other geopolitical players in the region and on the degree of stability. These factors make it possible to ensure the interests of the US in the post-Soviet space, which include: the prevalence in the world economy, the predominance of the military-strategic sphere, the spread of its geopolitical dominance in the region by limiting the influence of its rivals in the region and the fight against terrorism that helps to establish control the Islamic world.

At the same time, the problem of ensuring security in the region, conditioned by the fight against international terrorism has acquired a key importance in US policy, although the geopolitical interests of Washington were hidden under this slogan. Geopolitical domination is the US' top priority in the Central Asian region. In addition, the United States did not

prioritize security in the Central Asian region as the problems in other regions are the most significant for them.

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