NATO and Security of Central Asia

Elaheh Koolaee 1

Abstract
The disappearance of bipolar system following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, has also changed many strategic concepts. Central Asia, as a part of the Soviet empire, has become an arena for regional and global challenges after these transformations. The region, already faced with various political, economic, social and cultural problems, soon became a location for the activities of Islamic fundamentalists, which in turn intensified regional crisis. Different socio-political problems made the ground for these activities.

The basic question of this paper is: What is the role of NATO enlargement and its effects on security provision in Central Asia? This paper tries to answer that, “what role can NATO play in Central Asia in order to provide security in this region specially after September 11th and the following events”. Based on current security issues in Central Asia, America has seriously emphasized on socio-economic reforms under the” Greater Middle East” framework. Central Asian leaders are obliged to control political, social and economic crisis to prevent terrorist acts and reduce public dissatisfaction. Political transformations following the Soviet Union collapse have clearly revealed that the roots of threat and instability in Central Asia are essentially internal. Sooner or later, leaders of these states have to resolve these threats, based on a clear understanding of regional sociopolitical realities.2

Key words: NATO, Central Asia, Russia, America, Islamic Fundamentalism, Caspian Sea, Europe, Soviet Union, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

1. Associate Professor, Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Tehran, Enghelab Ave. Tehran .Iran; koolaee @ mail.com
2. This article is the result of a research plan in University of Tehran, titled: "NATO and Central Asia Security", tited
Introduction

Collapse of the Soviet Union and conversion of its fifteen states into independent countries caused deep and extensive changes in Central Asia. The disappearance of bipolar system following the disintegration of the Soviet Union has also changed many strategic concepts. Central Asia, as a part of the Soviet empire, has become an arena for regional and global challenges after these transformations. The region, already faced with various political, economic, social and cultural problems, soon became a location for the activities of Islamic fundamentalists, which in turn intensified regional crisis. Different sociopolitical problems made the ground for these activities. Extensive ethnical ties with Afghanistan caused Central Asia to be gravely influenced by the outcomes of civil war in this neighboring country.

The basic question of this paper raises is: “What is the role of NATO enlargement and its effects on security provision in Central Asia”? and tries to answer the that “what role can NATO play in Central Asia in order to provide security in this region specially after September 11th and the following events”. The Author tries to answer this question with survey of the different threats in the region after the independence of these countries.

Partnership for Peace (PfP) and Russia

There were extensive debates about how NATO and NACC could cooperate with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). There were also serious debates about peace keeping in Yugoslavia after its destruction and division. All these dialogues about the requirements and necessity of peace protection in after-the-cold-war Europe were accompanied by Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, proposed by NATO. PfP Program was announced in January 1994 as a mechanism to respond the security concerns of former Warsaw Treaty members including Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. They were extremely worried that the Soviet Union pattern might repeat again after its military invasion to Chechniya. The program was designed and implemented considering the sensitivities and concerns of the Russian Federation.

Since US had tried hard to use NATO as a means for global leadership under its preferred regulated framework and to run a campaign as if it is a necessity for the security of the world and Europe, the it firmly proposed new roles for NATO to establish peace and stability in and out of Europe. It included environment protection and humanitarian assistance to disaster-stricken countries in the new list of NATO responsibilities. From the beginning, NATO expansion advocates had noted the importance of relations with Russia and positions and views of this country. Many worked for Russia’s membership in NATO, while some argued for establishing proper arrangements for NATO-Russia

Meanwhile, new NATO members, especially Baltic States had no interest in gaining any special right by Russia regarding them. In March 1995, Estonian Foreign Minister strictly opposed granting any special jurisdiction or power to Russia as a part of Russia-NATO cooperation arrangements. NATO leaders, however, always emphasized the importance of coordination with Russian authorities.

Before the Soviet Union destruction, Russian leaders initially expressed their optimism for joining NATO. Boris Yeltsin even suggested NATO membership in December 1991, as a means for a new security system. Dominating Euro-Atlantic viewpoint in Russia justified this approach completely. Some Eastern Europe leaders had already proposed the idea of an “Eastern NATO”.

Leaders of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, who had the bitter experience of the Red Army presence, and were worried about the restoration of dominance-seeking behaviors in Russia after the destruction of the Soviet Union pleaded for a new security arrangements with NATO expansion toward the East. They were, therefore, the first states joining NATO. Partnership for Peace (PfP) program was NATO leaders’ –especially Americans’–first response to these concerns. The US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, proposed the program in October 1993. Despite Yeltsin’s initial agreement with NATO expansion, a combination of transformations, pressures, protests and objections were developed and intensified in Russia. It must be noted that Warren Christopher proposed this plan after the suppression of the Russian Duma by Yeltsin in October 1993. Following Russia’s military operation in Chechniya, there were more concerns about restoration of the policies of the Soviet Union era. Russia’s trends and directions in the Bosnia war and their support for Serbs –which was under the nationalists’ domestic pressures-aggravated these conflicts.

Unlike Euro-Atlantic supporters, Russian neo-Eurasianists intensified their opposition with NATO expansion, believing it is completely against the Russia’s interests. Eurasianists, among whom Yvgeny Primakev was one of the most prominent figures, admitted the importance of cooperation with the West, but sought a clear consideration of Russia’s interests in these arrangements. Many of them have clearly expressed their disagreement with NATO expansion in the Russian Duma. In their view, the US wants to strain Russia’s relations with

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 417.
10. Ibid., p. 13.
former Soviet Union states, and also tries hard to create conflicts between Russia and other Asian countries.

Many Russian experts believed that NATO expansion would harm the Russian democratic process seriously and have thus warned about empowerment of right or left wing extremists. Many Russians expected that after Warsaw Treaty dissolution, the US would ensure the same thing to happen to NATO; although some believed that NATO expansion would be in accordance with Russian interests, provided it could improve Russian cooperation with the West. Among extensive debates between opponents and proponents of NATO expansion, many noticed and warned about its possible consequences such as widening the gap between Russia and the West, starting a new cold war, increasing Russian efforts for enhancing its influence on its surrounding e.g. “Near Abroad”, weakening European security, and developing a new kind of militarism in Russia.

After formal invitation of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary in May 1997, NATO and Russia signed an agreement for official cooperation, according to which both sides announced that their security would be achieved by close ties with each other. After Helsinki Treaty in 1975 by which European countries emphasized on concerted efforts on many socio-political issues, this agreement was of considerable historical significance. The agreement consisted of four parts in which mechanisms for consultation and cooperation in military and political issues under Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council were recommended. The most important part was the foundation of Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council which might pave the way for solving many NATO-Russia disputes.

Russia and NATO agreement on the formation of Permanent Joint Council in order to coordinate mutual affairs, facilitated their cooperation. Commitment for development of democracy, human rights and market economy as well as avoiding coercion and military power application against each other were reflected in this agreement. In the 50th anniversary of NATO in April 1999, Russia was no longer considered a threat based on its new strategic concept. With the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary official joining NATO at the same year, the organization realized its expansion with 19 members.

**NATO after September 11**

11 Sep. 2001 terrorist attacks attracted more attention toward NATO; the US sought new options based on Article 5 of this treaty that requires all members to jointly defend any member who is under threat.
attack. Thus, global functions were proposed for NATO in the World War against terrorism, which the US brought up in response to the attacks on its soil. NATO which was initially established to confront Communism, was now being used against global threats imposed by unstable and powerless governments. The US and European governments wished to realize their own goals, so NATO had to accept new functions under new circumstances. NATO strategic concept review in 1999 was in line to these changes. In this regard, the cooperation of multinational forces in maintaining security and stability under the supervision of the United Nation Security Council and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) could be mentioned.

NATO has become an organization responding to the global needs of the US and Europe after Sep. 11. Twenty four hours after the attacks its members signed the mutual defense agreement on Sep. 12th for the first time in 52 years. The incident clearly demonstrated the importance of expanding ties between Europe and the US. Trans-Atlantic relations underwent a grave transformation after Sep. 11 that also included NATO relations with Russia. The US wanted NATO to become an organization for fighting terrorism and tries to apply the capacities of Article 5 for its own security needs after Sep. 11. Europeans’ opinions strongly agreed with this approach after those shocking incidents, and various polls clearly showed that the Europeans were willing to use their power along with the US in war on terrorism. The shocks resulted after Sep. 11 attacks also forced NATO expansion opponents to review their stance, and thus, the most important impacts were revealed in the relations between NATO and Russia and NATO expansion opponents.

Another important step was taken in November 2002 in Prague Summit: when the membership of three Baltic states as well as Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria was accepted. Aftermath of September 11 memberships of Baltic states was not considered a threat to Russia; instead, it was seen as a step for advancing democracy and market economic values in Northern Europe.

Using new NATO strategic concepts after Sep. 11 terrorist attacks, the war on terrorism was strongly emphasized. All NATO members had to use all their capabilities to perform their new roles and functions based on the new organization design. The condition for expanding cooperation with Russia was improved and most opposition came to an end after Sep. 11 although there were new competitions after a short time. NATO-Russia relations entered a new level following these changes and especially after Russia’s military cooperation with the US in Central Asia and Afghanistan. The successful experience of cooperation in Balkan war brought hopes of joint exploitation from coordinated activities.

1. Ibid., p. 110.
2. Ibid., p. 115.
4. Ibid., p. 89.
5. Ibid., p. 100.
Security Challenges in Central Asia

A brief review of security challenges in Central Asian region seems to be necessary for examining NATO’s roles and functions in maintaining Central Asian security. The Soviet Union dissolution rewarded the Central Asian States with an unwanted independence. Leaders who had shaped republic governments under the communist system, continued their operations as new national leaders. All except Askar Aghayev, the President of Kyrgyzstan, were Communist Party leaders in the Soviet Union era. Their dependent economies no longer received huge financial subsidies from Moscow, so they had to seek new business partners. It initially seemed that Central Asian states are moving toward political and economic openness; however, this trend was soon changed after stabilization of authoritarian governments.

Multiple economic crisis encountered in the aftermath of the Soviet Union dissolution as well as lack of proper social, cultural and political capacities and weak relations with global economy resulted in unfruitful economic reform. Landlocked-ness, lack of access to free waters, are other problems that make reshaping economic patterns difficult. Centuries of authoritarian leadership in the region and specifically the civil war experience in Tajikistan caused political openness and civil institutions development to be extremely difficult, although it initially seemed that Central Asian countries will move in this direction after the Soviet Union destruction.

Neighborhood with Afghanistan causes the region to be influenced by its internal changes. Ethnic linkages between Central Asia countries and Afghanistan accelerated this influence, which was facilitated when Najibollah government was overthrown. When Tajikistan civil war began, Kabul’s Tajik government strongly supported the opponents of Dushanbe government. Tajikistan was the only country in the region that allowed Islamic parties to have formal activity. Civil war in the country provided a good opportunity for Central Asian secular leaders to ban these parties and consider their activity as a regional security threat.

One of the serious problems in Central Asian due to its neighborhood with Afghanistan is illicit drug traffic as a main smuggling route to Europe. In fact, 80 percent of heroin reaching Europe crossed from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The enormous revenue

10. Ibid.
and profits obtained from this illegal business can solve many economic crises of the region. Administrative and political corruption in most governmental organizations of Central Asian countries has complicated the campaign against smugglers. As Taliban continued drug trade with a dual objective, most opposition groups in the region tried to use this resource to solve their financial problems. Taliban considered drug trade as a resource to meet their needs, as well as a lever to battle profanity. Weak and incapable governments ruling the region had no power to deal with this problem. Because of their structural weaknesses, they did not have the required capability to confront drug traffickers who gained huge revenues with this business. The fall of Taliban, along with the central government weakness, has in turn intensified the opium cultivation and as a result, drug traffic has increased.

Along with economic, ethnical and drug problems in Central Asia, environmental issues is worth to be mentioned. In addition to water shortage, these countries face extensive and various environmental problems as they did as the Soviet Union states. The region witnessed the drainage of the Aral Lake which was named an environmental catastrophe by the UN. In April 1993, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) emphasized in its summit in Tashkent on the necessity of taking urgent measures to reduce environmental problems and compensate the consequences. The socio-economic crisis of the region have in turn intensified the political, military and security threats and aggravated the influence of different regional and international powers.

**Energy Resources and the Transit Routes**

Considering the fact that the countries located on the east and the wet sides of the Caspian Sea have faced severe socio-economic problems after the Soviet Union disintegration, exploitation of its energy resources has earned growing importance. The escalating trend of socio-economic crisis in Central Asian countries projects the significance of these resources and their transit routes. American companies, seeking their interests by seriously influencing regional changes, were the most eminent players in the region after the Soviet Union destruction. In 1994, the US Secretary of State and Pakistan Military Intelligence Agency agreed on Taliban empowerment in Afghanistan, should the security of this country be guaranteed so that

---

1. Regional Leaders have Always Mentioned This Issue in Their Assults on Opposition Groups.
3. The UN Authorities Have Repeatedly Warned About This Issue, the Threat of Which is Obviously Toward Afghanistan Neighbors, Including IR Iran.
Pakistan would become the energy transfer route\(^1\). Unocal was the American company playing an active role in this project; however, Sep.11 events, showed them their tragic miscalculations while the American people paid the price.

Although Central Asia states possess enormous mineral resources –Turkmenistan has the fourth biggest natural gas resources, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have various minerals - their unemployment rate is very high. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have favorable natural features to generate energy from water resources; this provides great opportunities for cooperation with their neighboring countries\(^2\). However, socio-economic disintegration after the Soviet Union destruction and opposition of authoritarian governments in front of waves of democratic movement, as well as foreign interference have all suppressed the opportunities to use these economic capacities.

Different statistics are provided about the amount of energy resources in Caspian Sea and Central Asia\(^3\). However, it is generally accepted that approximately 3% of total known energy resources of the world are located in this region. Energy needs have caused many countries, especially Turkey and Pakistan, to be attracted to the Central Asian region. Turkey has focused its efforts on Caspian Sea basin and Azerbaijan resources\(^4\), while Pakistan played an important role in Taliban empowerment in Afghanistan in order to gain access to regional energy resources.

Countries such as Russia and Iran tried to expand their cooperation with these states to play their own role in providing access routes to the global markets\(^5\). Geographical situation of Central Asian and Caucasian countries (except Georgia) has made access to global markets an influential factor in their foreign relations; a factor that the US has used markedly to promote its role in the region\(^6\). While Iran and Russia try to transfer Caspian and Central Asian energy through their own territory, America has always stressed on the multiplicity and diversity of energy transfer routes\(^7\). Thus, it has supported the western pipelines from Baku to Supsa (in the Black Sea) and Geyhan (in the Mediterranean Sea) in spite of their heavy costs.

As mentioned before, energy transfer routes from Central Asia and Caspian Sea area have caused serious changes in the region in the decade following Soviet Union destruction\(^8\). Surrounding countries have made every effort to reach considerable financial profits and various political and economic advantages by transferring energy through their


territories. In the meantime, the US as always tried to deny Iran its right to use its natural advantages by providing an access route to open seas. America always followed “Everyone but Iran” policy in years after the Soviet Union destruction. Meanwhile, Russia tries to restore its traditional ties with Central Asian states and use the Soviet Union era pathways for energy transfer. Russia as the biggest oil exporter in the world—who competes with Saudi Arabia- and China as the largest oil importer have played significant roles in regional changes.

In their meetings and negotiations, Russian and Chinese authorities have discussed to build a 2400 Km pipeline from Argarsk in Siberia to Manchuria in China with a cost of $2.5 billion. China has always paid special attention to energy transfer via Central Asia. Both Russia and China have always resisted the US attempts to influence energy transfer from Central Asia. Uzbekistan, which has geopolitical dominance over the countries in the region, has tried continuously to expand its relations with the US in order to avoid Russian pressures. Furthermore, Kazakhstan with its deeply interrelated economy with Russia is seeking to build pipelines to export its oil to Eastern Asia especially China.

Turkmenistan, neighboring with Iran and Afghanistan, has become the Central Asia gateway. There were considerable efforts in this country to transfer natural gas to free waters via Iran and Pakistan. The most important of these efforts were American-Pakistani attempts to empower Taliban in Afghanistan so that they could guarantee security of energy transfer. But Russia has used its own influential levers in this competition. A 25-year contract between Russia and Turkmenistan for gas purchase clearly indicated the Russian geopolitical dominance in the region. Russia purchased about 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Turkmenistan just in 2004. Thus, energy resources had a great role in shaping deep and extensive competitions in the region, which reminds the Great Game.

The New Great Game
Following the Soviet Union dissolution and the resulting geopolitical vacuum in Central Asia, a new Great Game began in the region. This term reminds of Russia-Britain struggles over Western and Central Asia in the 19th century which ended up with October, 1917 Revolution. Considering its relations with the US and Europe as foreign policy priorities after the collapse, Russia urged regional leaders to accept the responsibility for security maintenance and pay its price themselves. But Tajikistan civil war changed the Russian politicians' attitude

2. Ibid., p. 2.
7. The United States, Russia, and Central Asia, New Cooperation or the Old Divide? Harriman Institute, Feb. 2004, p. 1, Harriman, Columbia.
NATO and Security of Central Asia

dramatically. Reinforcing its division 201 in Tajikistan, Russia supported Dushanbe against its Islamic-nationalist opponents, with the help of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan who were also concerned about expansion of Islamist movements in their territories. Although, Tajikistan civil war came to an end with Russian and Iranian assistance after Taliban empowerment in Afghanistan, its consequences and the fear of expanding political Islam sensitized Central Asian leaders about security problems. With the excuse of resisting Islamic groups, authoritarian states of the region increased their suppression of liberalism. Socio-economic crisis helped Islamists to promote their influence in the region, but Central Asian Islamic groups' relations with Taliban government intensified insecurity and instability in these countries.

Pakistan and America's support of Taliban as well as financial aids from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates to Islamic fundamentalists, quickly worsened regional security scenario. This has greatly concerned China about the appearance and spread of Central Asian socio-political instabilities in the Muslim province of Xinxiang. Ethnical ties accelerated the transfer of these instabilities from Central Asia to China. The presence of two million Kazaks is an evidence of considerable capacity for transferring instability to China. China’s energy interests are increasing day to day and that is the reason why it has recently been interested to regional issues. Central Asia leaders have in turn taken advantage of relations with Russia in order to suppress China’s influence. Some reports show that a number of Xinxiang had training courses in Afghanistan when Taliban ruled the country.

When Eurasian outlooks gained predominance in Russian foreign policy, relations with Central Asian states became a high priority. Threats of fundamentalist Islamic movements spreading into the territory of Russian Federation which habitats about 20 million Muslims is enough to justify this approach. Russia has created deep and extensive socio-economic correlations with these states; however, since the idea of “Russian Monroe Doctrine” was proposed, the Soviet Union territory has been of critical importance for Russian leaders so that any kind of foreign interference has been considered a serious threat to Russian interests. Features of dependency inherited from the Soviet Union era facilitated the restoration of Russia’s influence in the region, although the US has seriously tried to prevent Russian power renewal. America

* Referring to the US President, James Monroe, Who Warned European Countries from Interfering in South American Countries Affairs in 1823, and Called the Region America’s Backyard.
targeted the containment of Iran and Russia in the post-Soviet Union era.

Following the destruction of bipolar system, Iran has attempted to change its foreign policy from idealism to realism. Although Tajik events and the initial responses from Islamic Republic of Iran leaders concerned Central Asian countries of Iran's possible attempts to help Islamic activists, the positive role Iran played - along with Russia - in bringing Tajikistan civil war to an end ceased these concerns. Iran provides the only safe and secure route for geographical access of Central Asian countries to various economic advantages; however, due to America's "containment" strategy, it was not able to take benefit of this capacity to meet its own interests and regional needs. The US has clearly and continuously announced its opposition and actually took actions against energy transfer via Iran. However, Iran is swapping a small percentage of regional energy resources in the oil terminals of Persian Gulf.

Another factor influencing regional insecurity is the new legal regime of the Caspian Sea. Iran, signifying and emphasizing on a consensus among all neighboring countries, has always stressed on its legal rights. Disagreements between littoral countries about each one's rights and responsibilities provided an opportunity for outsiders and extra-regional powers to interfere in the issues of this lake.

Considering the importance of energy issue in America's foreign diplomacy, the Caspian Sea has become the most important strategic point for the US. Regional changes show that the Great Game is now mainly focused in the Caspian Sea area. The American government estimates that 4.7 million barrels would be produced daily in this region in 2010 and therefore, considers it as one of the most important world regions in reducing vulnerability for global oil market changes and in diversifying its own energy resources. Most oil resources outside Middle East will soon vanish and the US has tried to decrease its reliance upon importation from Saudi Arabia after Sep. 11 attacks; these all indicate the growing importance of Caspian Sea oil resources for the United States. America believes that it needs to control world energy resources if it wanted to play a global leadership. According to some estimates, Kashghan oil resource in Kazakhstan, containing approximately 25 billion barrels of crude oil, is the biggest resource in the world. In Azerbaijan, the capacity of Shah Deniz oil resources is also estimated to be about 5.9 billion barrels.

The United States has seriously tried to prevent restoration of Russia's influence in the former Soviet Union states. Assisting and promoting state-building process in Central Asian and Caucasian region was a

---

high priority in the US regional policy. Because of their proximity to the region, however, Iran and Russia have a specific geographical advantage\(^1\) which the US can not deny, which complicates geopolitical games of the region. China also considers growing American influence in the region, a threat for its own interests, thus pursuing proximity to Russia\(^2\). Opposing America's attempts for establishing a hegemonic order, China and Russia tend to build a multi-polar world.

The US is gravely worried that nuclear technology may disseminate from Russia if external pressures increase. Many Russian authorities have already expressed the necessity to review disarmament agreements with the US, should NATO expand to the East\(^3\). Russia's influential role in establishing peace and security in the Caspian Sea and its extensive outcomes especially on developing relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran was an issue of constant concern for the US. Russia, faced with Islamic and ethnicity-driven threats in its own soil\(^4\), finds its relations with the US a necessity for its national interests after Sep. 11. Following terrorist attacks on the American soil and after the US government's declaration of war on terror, Russia has been looking for a faster improvement of its relations with the US.

**Threats of Islamic Fundamentalism**

After the collapse the Soviet Union, national leaders of the region had to face a serious political alternative, the political Islam. It was clear that despite decades of anti-Islamic propaganda, Islam would have a major role in determining the regional identity after the demise of communism. Regarding this fact, changes in Afghanistan, the fall of the communist regime and the occurrence of civil war in this country had immediate effect on Islamic movements in Central Asia\(^5\). In contrary to initial propaganda against Iran disseminating political Islam, it soon became clear that the real Islamic threat is not coming from Iran, but from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia\(^6\). Conversely, by playing a positive role in bringing Tajikistan civil war to an end, Iran showed well that it is trying to improve its economic, political and social ties in the region. Like Russia, Iran has always clearly announced its opposition to the presence of foreign powers in the region\(^7\).

In the face of weakness of civil and political institutes in the region, Islamic activists have become a speaking tongue for protesting against various political, economic and social difficulties\(^8\). Islamists have also become suitable agents for campaigning against authoritarian ruling regimes.

---

Regional problems have increasingly enhanced their influence. Following the Tajikistan civil war experience, they succeeded in restricting these activities by drawing a direct linking line between political parties’ activity and instability and challenge in this country.

Islamic parties and groups have expanded their activities in all Central Asia countries, although there was no room for legal activity in any country except Tajikistan. In all these countries, political veterans of the communism era consider Islamic movement as a strong rival. Jome Namangani and Taher Yuldash, leaders of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) participated in a series of terrorist acts against Islam Karimov. Their agents were also identified in Feb. 1999 bombing in Tashkent. They even took a number of Japanese as hostage in Kyrgyzstan in August 1999 and then kidnapped a number of American mountain climbers, too. Uzbek authorities accused Islamists of drug trafficking for providing resources for their activities. Tajikistan civil war provided an opportunity for Karimov to increase his pressure on Islamic activists. There are reports about IMU being related with Al Qaeda. The result was that Uzbekistan played a major role in suppressing Talibani Islamists in the region and also in toppling Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Transfer of Taliban's ideology into Central Asia cleared out the roots of threats in the region. After all, regional leaders used Islamic threat as an instrument for suppressing their opponents and increasing pressures.

Security of Central Asia after Sep. 11

Terrorist attacks in America changed Central Asian situation completely, with its presence in Afghanistan to overthrow Taliban and fight Al Qaeda and Bin Laden. American military forces soon showed that they do not intend to leave the region after Taliban's fall. Along with promoting its military ties with regional countries, the US negotiated with Japan, Australia and other Asian countries showing their interest for establishing an Asian security treaty (Asian NATO). America clearly showed that it is its strategy to stay in Asia. Their troops have been positioned in Khanabad, Uzbekistan and Manas, Kyrgyzstan. For some Central Asia leaders such as Islam Karimev and Askar Aghayev, America's presence is a mechanism for reducing the ever-increasing pressures of Russia and China.

Russia has strongly opposed its continuous presence in Central Asia, and expanded its influence in the region by installing and continuously operating Kant military base in Kyrgyzstan, permanent presence of division 201 in Tajikistan, signing a 25-year agreement for purchasing natural gas from Turkmenistan, and promoting the role of

2. Ibid.

---

www.globalpolicy.org/empire/international/2004/0325.centralsia.htm
huge governmental organizations such as Gas Prum1. Meanwhile, the US has focused on regional factors of instability and insecurity. Considering Afghanistan civil war and the activity of Talibani fundamentalists in that country, America has emphasized on the necessity of economic and social reforms2 in order to enhance regional economic growth and advance collective security systems.

China and Russia, concerned of America's military presence in the region, expanded their military and financial ties more than ever. Upgrading collective regional security treaty –formed by Russia and Central Asian states in the first years after the Soviet Union destruction- to the level of organization is a clue of these concerns3. Central Asia was an important issue in American diplomacy before Sep. 11 because of its vast energy resources, but after those terrorist attacks, it became a permanent target for American foreign policy4.

The US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, talked about America's persistent interests in Central Asia in his speech before Foreign Relations Committee of the Congress. Although there was no room for this kind of speech before Sep. 11 events; however, launching war on terror and also Taliban's activity in the region paved the way for expressing this view. George W. Bush, stating America's foreign policy, emphasized on peace expansion through establishing open societies and confronting terrorism and tyranny5. Regional governments followed economic and political reforms according to America's new policies. Passing "Enduring Freedom Act", American Congress provided the opportunity for their persistent presence in Central Asia, an objective which was in clear contrast with Russian and Chinese security considerations.

Prior to Enduring Freedom Act, Silk Road Strategy Act was passed in March 1999 in order to assist Central Asian and Caucasian economic and political restructuring and improve economic development in the region. After terrorist attacks in Tashkent and Batkin (Kyrgyzstan) Madeleine Albright suggested Border Security Project for Central Asia (America's $3 million assistance to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and then Turkmenistan and Tajikistan can be viewed in the same framework6). Meanwhile, the US Secretary of State put Islamist Movement of Uzbekistan in its list of terrorist groups. In brief, America's energy priorities in Central Asia were closely linked to security issues after Sep. 11.

Among all countries of the region, Uzbekistan has been the greatest suppressor of individual and social freedoms and violator of human rights. However, because of its critical geopolitical position in the region, Uzbekistan attracted America's highest attention and cooperation7. The US has aggravated

---

5. Ibid., p. 2.
its pressures on Islam Karimov for fulfilling economic and political reforms.

By the way, the Russian Federation, China and Iran consider America's long-term presence as an unfavorable event which in turn can lead to new threats. Many American experts were concerned of the consequences of American troops' long-term presence in the region after Sep. 11. The experience of supporting Taliban for inhibiting Iran from energy transfer from Central Asia and Caucasus and its irretrievable damages, was only one of the reasons justifying these concerns. But the US government believes that close supervision over regional issues and stabilization of economic and political processes are strategically important in providing security in the region and the world, especially America’s national security. Initially forming a close cooperation with the US to suppress Taliban, Russia has then opposed permanent presence of the US troops in the region.

NATO and Security of Central Asia
There are deep changes in NATO’s nature and function after the Soviet Union disintegration. These changes were consistent with international system transformations which were intensified following Sep. 11, 2001. Due to lack of Russia’s power there are deep changes in NATO’s nature and function. These changed were consistent with international system transformations which were intensified following Sep. 11, 2001, leading to NATO expansion in the region. When military forces suppressed the Russian Duma to support the President, NATO’s expansion toward the East as well as requests from three Eastern Europe countries –Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic- for security provision gained greater importance. Changes in Russians in foreign policy caused their position against NATO expansion to change considerably. Some Russian officials supported joining NATO and some seriously opposed it. However, they all soon expressed their strong objection to NATO’s presence in the former Soviet Union territory and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Partnership for Peace (PfP) program reflects America’s attempts to decrease Russian’s sensitivities and increasing domestic conflicts between right and left wing nationalists and those who supported expanding ties with the US. Russian military operation in Chechniya provided good evidence for countries that were worried about Russia’s willingness for expansion after the Soviet Union. By designing and implementing PfP, NATO leaders tried to respond the security concerns of Eastern European and CIS countries. All Central Asian states joined the program before 2003 in order

---

to design and implement military cooperations, the trend of which was completed between 1997 and 2003. Tajikistan was the last country to join the program. While American troops were deployed to Central Asia region, NATO's role was becoming more prominent. Central Asian states organize their military relations with the US according to the weight of their ties with Russia.

Since Sep. 11, countries of the region have focused on greater cooperation with America, the framework of which was provided by PfP program. Russia's strong sensitivity posed serious limitations on NATO's activities in Central Asia, although many Russian authorities prefer America to be present in Fargana Valley than Taliban. Regional leaders tried to expand their ties with NATO especially after hostage crisis in Kyrgyzstan, to confront threats caused by their opponents and Islamic fundamentalists. Turkmenistan, with its closed political environment created by Safar Morad Niazov, has not practically developed extensive relations with NATO and had kept it formally. Unlike Turkmenistan, Baltic states have strongly pursued and requested for NATO membership. Because of Russia’s extensive presence in the region, there were great limitations for organizing ties with NATO; these limitations changed considerably after Sept 11. Central Asian countries did not achieve the basic political, social and economic characteristics required for NATO membership; Sept 11 aftermath, however, gave America the opportunity to be directly and militarily present in the region.

Conclusion

After the Sep. 11, the United Stated has considered the security of Central Asia as an important part of its “Greater Middle East” plan. It has intensified in creating a hegemonic order after those terrorist attacks. Russia’s weakness was another factor for this increasing acceleration. Central Asian leaders who had carried out collective regional arrangements with Russia and China -from 1992 Tashkent Security Treaty to 1996 Shanghai Treaty- turned their attention to develop political and military relations with the US. In this new situation, Uzbekistan is a special priority, and this concerns other countries.

But “Colored Revolutions” in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrkyzstan changed the political situation of the region once again. Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan has played a very brutal role in Andijan demonstration, where about one hundred people had died. Islam Karimov accused to prepare another “Colored Revolution” in Uzbekistan, with help of Islamic fundamentalist of abroad. He has permanently talked about the threats of Islamic fundamentalism in the region as the severe threat. After these

3. Ibid.
developments, his ties with Moscow improved rapidly.

Russian authorities have also expressed their opposition to America’s presence several times. They believe that America has not realized Russia’s reciprocal expectations. Putin administration in Russia, however, has adopted a positive stance towards America’s war on terror in Central Asian region. But Russia’s extensive cooperation with the US and its support of the Northern Front for toppling Taliban –in which Iranian government had also a major role- did not receive a proper response from the US. America soon made it clear that it does not intend to leave Central Asia and is reinforcing its military forces in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Domestic pressures have been increasing on Putin to stop this trend, considering his behavior as unilateral concessions. In order to strengthen its presence in Central Asia, Russia faces serious economic problems. Regional leaders are in turn becoming increasingly dependent upon America against various domestic threats.

Most of the former KGB agents and also members of current Russian security agency (FBS) and authorities of Defense Ministry, Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Interior have expressed their grave oppositions to American presence and influence on Central Asia. Founded in 2000, NATO-Russia Joint Council has not been able to respond to these concerns and protests. Chinese leaders are also worried about America’s increasing presence in Central Asia. Uzbekistan, was a member of GUUAM\(^1\) Regional Union became America’s strategic ally in war on terrorism in Central Asia. Tashkent government has previously shown its interest for developing relations with the US, rather than NATO, but after Andijan events this strategic linkage has been ended. An important factor in adopting this strategy was to fight Islamic fundamentalists who have been threatening Islam Karimov’s government. After the Soviet Union destruction, Uzbekistan government tried to reach at an influential position in the region, which Russia did not recognize however currently the two countries have experienced close relationship again.

Although the roles and influence of NATO, Shanghai Security Treaty and Tashkent Treaty – which has been promoted to Organization- should not be underestimated in security provision in Central Asia, Sep. 11 incident and aftermath gave America an opportunity to take the lead in war on terrorism, and thus increasing its military forces in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. This policy has been firmly rejected by Russia and Vladimir Putin faced with severe domestic pressures. With Pakistan’s assistance, America facilitated Taliban empowerment in Afghanistan in order to achieve its own goals, this time by using Al Qaeda’s terrorist activities, which was supported by Taliban. Central Asian leaders with their authoritarian views have also found war on terrorism a favorable chance to suppress their own opponents more severely.

\(^1\) After exit of Uzbekistan: GUAM
Based on current security issues in Central Asia, US has seriously emphasized on socio-economic reforms under “the Great Middle East” framework. Central Asian leaders are obliged to control political, social and economic crisis to prevent terrorist acts and reduce public dissatisfaction. Political transformations following the Soviet Union collapse have clearly revealed that the roots of threat and instability in Central Asia are essentially internal. Sooner or later, leaders of these states have to resolve these threats, based on a clear understanding of regional sociopolitical realities. Colored Revolution has the situation more complicated and to analyze these developments we need further time.

ناتو و امنیت آسیای مرکزی

الهمه کوئی‌اَت

در پی تجزیه اتحاد شوروی و تبدیل پانزده جمهوری آن به کشورهای مستقل، منطقه آسیای مرکزی شاهد تحولات و دگرگونی گسترده و عمیق بوده است. از میان رفتار نظام دور قطعی در پی فروپاشی اتحاد شوروی نیز سبب تحول برخی از مقامات استراتژیک شد. منطقه آسیای مرکزی بعنوان یکی از قلمرو سایر امپراتوری شوروی پس از این دگرگونی‌ها به عرصه سیاست‌گذاری و اجتماعی تبدیل شده است. این منطقه که با مشکلاتی گسترده و سنن سیاسی-اقتصادی-اجتماعی-فرهنگی مواجه بوده، به رویهای مقاومت و سازگاری هم‌آمیزی پیشبرده شده بوده و در جنگ‌های آمریکا-آسیای شرقی در جهان بین‌المللی نیز از این میان بوده است.

در این مقاله به پیامدهای کشوری پس از طرح راهبردی آمریکا در آسیای مرکزی پرداخته شده است. ۱ این راهبرد شامل تصمیم‌گیری‌های آمریکا در این منطقه می‌باشد که با اعمال ویژه‌ای شده و انتقالات اطرافی از ناحیه ایران به‌طور عمده به‌طور کلی از نظر سیاسی و اقتصادی از نظر معناداری بوده است.

۱. دانیال، دانشکده حقوق و علوم سیاسی، دانشگاه تهران
۲. این مقاله از یک طرح تحقیقاتی تحت عنوان ناتو و امنیت آسیایی مرکزی استخراج شده که با اعمال یک روش پژوهش دانشگاه تهران اجرای گردیده است.

و ازگنگ کلیدی: ناتو، آسیای مرکزی، روسیه، آمریکا، پادگان‌آمیزی، سیاست، دریای خزر، اروپا، اتحاد شوروی، تاجیکستان، ازبکستان.