



THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN CENTRAL ASIA

Dilmurodov Dilmurod Dilshodjon ugli
3rd-year student of the Faculty of "International Relations"
of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy
E-mail: dilmurodov3033@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. The article analyzes the US strategic initiatives in the Central Asia. As well as the pros and cons of such a development of events.

KEY WORDS: *Central Asia, USA, integration, economics, geopolitics.*

Since the end of the last century, the US government began to develop and implement its own special strategy in the Central Asian region. Where did it start? Analysts agree that Washington began to show particular interest in the region not after the collapse of the USSR, but after a while, since 1992. The White House initially did not have a specific plan for the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, during this period of time they were more interested in Russia, and Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan were more perceived as "Russia's backyard". However, since April 1997, the priority of US interests in the region has changed, which was first clearly recorded in a report sent to Congress by the US State Department. Washington has focused on energy security, aid and human rights protection. In addition, anti-American sentiment began to grow in Russia, and it is believed that this is precisely why the United States turned its gaze to the new republics, for it feared the restoration of the Soviet regime and the strengthening of Russia's influence. It was from this moment that the struggle for influence in the region began, to which China later joined.

As the world's largest consumer of energy, the United States has a vested interest in developing gas and oil production in the region and preventing Russian control of resource supplies. In addition, the United States has declared the whole world as a sphere of its interests, so this problem is also of a strategic nature in relation to the "security of the West". Therefore, now, the US is considering Central Asia as part of a larger geopolitical construction. In this regard, for a certain time, several priority strategic concepts of the United States in the Central Asian region were developed. One of the latest is a concept called Central Asia + 1 (C5 + 1), proposed by John Kerry in 2015. It is a continuation of the famous Anglo-Saxon tradition "The Great Game", once introduced into mass circulation by the romantic popularizer of British colonialism, Rudyard Kipling. The highlight of the current project is that the United States "relinquished" its dominance in the region and directed all its forces to organizing a dialogue between all five countries of Central Asia.



The Secretary of State also noted that this is not a zero-sum game on the part of America, that each country chooses the path of its relations with others, that everyone should be free from intimidation and pressure, and make decisions based on free will of expression. The new stage of American attention to the region is part of a larger process related to the redistribution of influence throughout Central Eurasia and beyond, including the Asia-Pacific region. Today, the US is going to focus on four dimensions of cooperation: economic ties and their development, regional security, the environment, and, of course, human rights. These four components will become those facets along which cooperation between 5 countries and the USA will be conducted at the moment. Washington wants the countries of Central Asia to strengthen, first of all, ties between themselves, stop conflicts and resolve omissions, which means they organize a powerful union and successfully integrate into the world community as a separate actor.

However, one should not forget that Washington, in this “peacemaking” is also pursuing its own interests. Of course, in many ways now, this is primarily a policy of curbing China, within which it is necessary to limit the vector of its development in the direction of Central Asia, the Middle East and the Middle East. The fundamental difference between the current US initiatives for the countries of the region is the minimum of pathos and the emphasis on purely pragmatic interests. At minimal cost to the US itself. On the other hand, it is also a policy of containing Russia's influence in the region by reducing the leverage of pressure on the countries of the region. One of the key levers of pressure is that Russia supplies energy resources to Europe and other countries through Russia. The United States tried to build new ones, for example, the Trans-Caspian pipeline, but nothing came of it due to disagreements between the countries and the project has been frozen for the time being. The Baku-Deihan project was the only one that Washington has implemented so far. Also, the diplomatic relations of the neighboring countries are at a very good level, which strengthens the position of Russia in the region, which, of course, does not like the United States.

Despite this, John Kerry, in turn, noted that “the policy of this region should not be the dominant choice between the United States, Russia or China”. “We live in a different time,” he added. On the other side of the pragmatic interests of the United States is the project to create a military base in Central Asia, especially after the closure of the air base in the Kyrgyz Manas. One of the proposed options is the creation of a base in the Turkmen Mary, because the value of such a base for the United States increases after the start of Russia’s operation in Syria. Moreover, Washington has already used the Mary airfield since 2001 as a transit and temporary one. So, it is quite possible that the agreement will be revised. In addition to all this, the region is attracted by the fact that it has a large supply of resources, so necessary for the United States and its allies. Therefore, the development, production and supply is an important factor in relations with Washington. All this suggests that, uniting Central Asia, the United States is primarily guided by its own interests. In this regard, John Kerry made his first trip to Central Asia and met with the leaders of five countries. In the period from October 28 to November 4, 2017, he visited Turkmenistan (Ashgabat), Kazakhstan (Astana), Uzbekistan (Tashkent), Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek), Tajikistan



(Dushanbe). In Bishkek, Kerry attended the opening of the new campus of the American University of Central Asia. He also congratulated on the successful holding of parliamentary elections in the country, which is one of the fundamental factors for Washington.

In addition, they support the nationalist currents in Kazakhstan “I live in Kazakhstan, I must speak Kazakh”, the government adheres to the same principle. But as we know, it is not new for the US to support such a position. On November 1, Samarkand hosted a meeting of the leaders of the Central Asian region and US Secretary of State John Kerry, this was the first meeting in the C5 + 1 format, a new program launched by the US to assist with Central Asia. Speaking to his colleagues, John Kerry stressed that the countries of the region need to have “healthy and mutually beneficial relations among themselves”, to search for solutions to issues in the field of energy security, without which there will be no further progress in the region. “We have made a good start in projects such as CASA-1000, which is designed to create a regional electricity market and is aimed at supplying electricity from Central to South Asia”, he said.

As a result of the meeting, a Joint Declaration of Partnership and Cooperation between the five countries of Central Asia and the United States was adopted. They also approved the regular C5 + 1 format for holding a regular dialogue between the United States and the Central Asian countries. In addition, the program of US assistance to the countries of Central Asia, aimed at strengthening the integration of the region, was presented. As well as economic interconnection within the framework of the New Silk Road initiative. The initiative to create a New Silk Road (NSR) is not new, it was first proposed on July 21, 1997 by S. Talbott, emphasizing the importance of US policy in the Central Asian Coalition (CAC), called for “correct integration” and mentioned “important trade and transport corridor along the old Silk Road between Europe and Asia. Much later, in November 1998, the draft Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999, which was never approved, was submitted to the House of Representatives of the US Congress. In 2001, the Silk Road Caucus was created in the US House of Representatives. This emphasized the attention of the United States to the problem of the revival of transport routes. Further, from 2001 to 2011, Washington constantly returned to the topic of the NSR, but nothing particularly global was done, minor work was carried out to restore sections of roads, bridges and other infrastructure. The New Silk Road strategy was first publicly outlined by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her July 20, 2011 speech in Chennai, India. Also, the strategy of the New Silk Road was discussed at the meeting of ministers of the countries of Central and South Asia in New York on September 22, 2011. After that, the topic of the NSR resumed again.

And the principles of the NSR have been transferred to the topic of energy. The CASA-1000 project was created to form the Regional Electricity Market that unites Central and South Asia (CASAREM). Via high-voltage transmission lines from the Kyrgyz Republic to Tajikistan (477 km), and from Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan (another 750 km).⁹³ The problem of the project is the lack of funding sources and the presence of high investment risks. In addition, there are less global projects aimed at the development of energy. For example, the USAID Regional Security, Energy and Trade (RESET) project, aimed at maintaining a reliable energy supply in Kyrgyzstan, uninterrupted power supply in



the winter and hot season, as well as the development of a regional energy market. Another project is TUTAP (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan) – the construction of a power line between these countries. The most expensive is TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India) – a gas pipeline construction project. Most of these projects are in the discussion phase. An obstacle to the implementation of projects is the lack of funds, the absence of large investors, high risks associated with the unstable situation in the region, and unresolved conflicts between the participating countries.

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