

GEOPOLITICS AND REGIONAL SECURITY

MID-TERM STIMULI, BASIC PRINCIPLES, AND READJUSTMENTS: AMERICA IN CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT

The United States is kept busy by the events unfolding worldwide and on the Eurasian continent (the Ukrainian crisis, Afghanistan, the anti-Russian sanctions, oil and gas prices, the Muhammad cartoons crisis, the Lausanne talks on the Iranian nuclear file, etc.). Under the pressure of these and many other factors, Washington is actively readjusting its Central Asian policy, as well as its conceptual approaches to the regional policies of other players and to the changing specifics of each of the Central Asian countries.

Its claims to regional leadership are challenged by the Color Revolutions and its ambiguous involvement in the Middle East. Hence the tectonic shifts in the minds of the Central Asian elites, the dampened pro-Western enthusiasm, and the noticeable changes in public opinion in the Central Asian republics.

The author has discussed America's foreign policy and its implementation in the region based on the values the United States declares to be fundamental, the specifics of the "progress of democracy," and

the new real and potential regional security risks. Possible steps by other players involved in the region—China, Russia, Turkey, and Iran—and America’s possible response to potential developments are also discussed.

The author looks at the relations between the U.S. and each of the Central

Asian republics. When analyzing the relationship between Washington and Astana, Tashkent, Ashghabad, Dushanbe, and Bishkek, he concentrates on synergetic methods, which presuppose the quest for and use of active constructive impacts on unstable situations.

KEYWORDS: *The U.S., Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, foreign policy, international relations, synergy.*

Introduction

America’s readjusted approaches to Central Asia are shown by the completion of Operation Enduring Freedom and the new National Security Strategy discussed and adopted by U.S. Congress. The American administration has revised some of the fundamental values of its foreign policy course. This has been amply confirmed by the way the White House responds to the presence of other players in Central Asia (Russia, China, EU members, Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, Middle Eastern countries, and others),¹ as well as Washington’s statements relating to the political developments in the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

U.S. regional policies follow the changing interests of the American companies, American military-industrial complex, and transnational giants, the primary concern being economic growth, which creates demand for American exports.

Washington is following the changing situation and the political and economic processes unfolding in the Central Asian countries.

In any case, the American administration proceeds from the uncontested principles that travel from one official document to another: Central Asia is a link of the interconnected world in which the United States has national interests; the U.S. should become and remain the strongest leader in this part of the world to preserve regional order. This means that Washington should promote and impose its interests and values on the region’s states, up to and including the use of force.

The following organizations can be described as tools or subjective factors of the efforts described above: the U.S. Department of State; the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs; Congress; the National Security Council; the Department of Defense; and other levers of pressure, as well

¹ For more details, see: R. Abdullo, “Central Asian Countries and the United States: Ups and Downs in Their Relationships,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (36), 2005, pp. 43-50; M. Bratersky, A. Suzdaltsev, “Central Asia: A Region of Economic Rivalry among Russia, China, the U.S., and the EU,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (57), 2009, pp. 78-88; A. Saidmuradov, E. Puseva, “The Greater Central Asia Concept in U.S. Foreign Policy in the Central Asian Region,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 11, Issue 3, 2010, pp. 102-108; M. Laumulin, “U.S. Central Asian Policy Under President Barack Obama,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 11, Issue 4, 2010, pp. 41-54; V. Karyakin, “U.S. Middle Eastern Policy: New Approaches and Old Problems,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 11, Issue 4, 2010, pp. 79-87; G. Yuldasheva, “U.S. Strategy in Central Asia: Problems and Achievements,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 12, Issue 2, 2011, pp. 141-151; V. Laumulin, “U.S. Strategy and Policy in Central Asia,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (46), 2007, pp. 46-56.

as the media and officials of the U.S. administration, diplomats (Anthony Blinken, Nisha Biswal, and Richard Hoagland), and the special envoys for Iran and the Middle East, etc.

The academic and expert communities, as well as analysts from universities and other structures are actively contributing to the elaboration of new strategic and tactical trends. They are Frederic Starr, Paul Wolfowitz, and Martha Olcott, to name but a few.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace headed by notorious William Burns with offices in Beijing and Moscow, the Council on Foreign Relations, which publishes the *Foreign Affairs* journal, the Brookings Institution headed by Strobe Talbott, and the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at the Johns Hopkins University can be described as instrumental subjective factors.

In the mid-term perspective, the United States wanted to remain in the region to supervise the presidential elections in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, the constitutional reforms (in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) to ensure they are carried out in line with international standards, and the policy of the new leader of Afghanistan.

How the Declared Values are Realized

Since 1991, the United States has been presenting itself in the region as “the greatest force of peace, progress, and human dignity the world has ever known,” while American leadership was offered as the “global force for good.” The White House officials frequently quote the Holy Koran: “Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see its results.”

When talking about Washington’s priorities in Central Asia, the leading American experts in the region invariably turn to how Strobe Talbott described Central Asia in July 1997 in the SAIS where he spoke as Deputy Secretary of State: “free societies at peace with themselves and with each other.”² This is the foundation of American Central Asian policy put in a nutshell.

At one time, Talbott warned that the region might become an arena of never-ending rivalry of the Great Powers, a breeding ground of terror, and a seat of religious and political extremism. An experienced politician, he was moderately tolerant of Turkey’s regional initiatives and very concerned about the possible Iranian impacts.

He believed that “our presence and influence in the region can itself be a force for the right kind of integration.” Among other things, “the efforts of non-governmental organizations and businesses”³ would be important for the overall success of American policy in the region.

Many of his forecasts were realized, yet he was not quite right about Turkey’s influence in the region and the prospects for social partnership of the unfolding “second” and “third” sectors in Central Asia.

Today, on the eve of the final withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan, the United States is interested in the enormous potential of a “region that could act as an economic bridge from Istanbul to Shanghai and provide opportunities for our own businesses, technologies, and innovations to take

² For more details, see: J. Shaw, *Washington Diplomacy: Profiles of People of World Influence*, Algora Publishers, New York, 2002, p. 238.

³ “Talbott Details U.S. Approach to Caucasus, Central Asia (Administration seeks more funds for region),” 21 July, 1997, The Embassy of the United States of America to Israel, available at [<http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/press/state/archive/1997/july/sd20722.htm>].

root; a region that could offer goods and energy to the booming economies of South and East Asia; and a region that could serve as a stabilizing force for Afghanistan's transition and an indispensable partner in the fight against narco-trafficking, terrorism, and extremism. The United States wants to broaden and deepen our bilateral relationships with each of the states in Central Asia. At the same time, we do not see these relationships in the region as exclusive, or zero-sum, in any way."⁴

The United States has admitted that "progress of democracy has been halting" and, at the same time, deemed it necessary to declare: "We are present" and we are "engaged with the governments of the countries and their civil societies."

Washington obviously has no intention of abandoning its rhetoric about human rights, the stronger presence of civil society institutions, and wider religious freedoms. From time to time, the U.S. administration voices its concerns about the infringements on human rights across the vast territory stretching from the Caspian to the Chinese borders.

Americans are constantly concerned about the spread of terrorism, as well as the poor state of prisons and the penitentiary system as a whole. Recently, in light of the terrorist acts in Europe and the wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, the United States has developed new concerns about the radicalization and reproduction of crime in Central Asian prisons accompanied by related problems—the quality of the judicial system, reforms of the judicial and legal systems, improvement of the mechanisms of amnesty, rehabilitation and re-socialization of convicts, ensuring employment, etc.

Very much as before, Washington intends to build a more open society because "the more people can't find outlets for their frustrations and their fears that are productive outlets, you can almost guarantee that they'll find negative outlets for that." The United States, however, will have to revise its attitude to convicts as potential members of illegal armed units.

Attitude to Other Players

The most powerful of the geopolitical players, the United States, however, cannot remain indifferent to what other players are doing in the region. In view of the organizational and geopolitical isolation of South and Central Asia, the players can be divided into external (China, Russia, Turkey, Iran, etc.) and internal (India and Pakistan).

During the anti-Taliban operation in Afghanistan, the region became even more dependent on big Chinese investments. It should be said that **China** has outstripped Russia⁵ in terms of trade volume with the five Central Asian republics, even though Russia has stepped up its efforts. According to the media, Washington has mixed feelings about this and has been paying much more attention to China's investment principles and economic and legal statements, which differ from the Western ones, attitude to the local (non-Chinese) workforce, the quality of projects, etc.

The SCO headed by China is still a very loose structure with a low level of cohesion and efficiency.

Washington is no less concerned about the decision to set up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and over a dozen less influential financial structures.⁶ While talking about the investments of the key countries, China in particular, as being very important for the region and its

⁴ "The United States and Central Asia: An Enduring Vision for Partnership and Connectivity in the 21st Century," 31 March, 2015, Brookings Institution [www.brookings.edu].

⁵ See: J. Mankoff, *The United States and Central Asia after 2014. A Report of the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program. January 2013*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., 2013.

⁶ See: I. Talley, "U.S. Looks to Work with China-Led Infrastructure Fund," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 March, 2015.

countries, the United States does not conceal its concerns about internal rules, decision-making, the role of the Board of Directors, standards in human rights, environmental protection, intellectual property, etc. Washington relies on its vast experience of creating and supporting the standards observed by dozens of the largest international financial institutions.

Beijing is invariably cautious when it comes to propaganda, which means that the United States will hardly develop “permanent concerns” associated with the AIIB.

According to another scenario, the United States might accumulate resources and liberalize the principles by which pro-Western financial institutions are guided and allow them to cooperate with the AIIB (up to and including direct involvement of the U.S.’s key allies in it). In addition, new Asian bank “clones,” interaction among the creditors, etc. are possible.

One tends to agree with the author, who writes that “these (Central Asian.—*Ed.*) states ... distrust China’s reliability on border security and view their economic relationships with China as unequal. Many of their intellectuals think that China is mishandling the Uighur problem and that instability in China could spill over and affect their countries.”⁷

The Central Asian neighbors of China are involved in a bitter rivalry for partnership relations with China and control over Chinese trade and transit routes.

In view of the keenly felt vulnerability of the western borders, which are too long and poorly fortified, China, which knows that other powers are unpredictable, while the loyalty of the local Muslim population does not stretch too far, is placing its stakes on maintaining stability outside its borders.

This means that it needs peaceful and predictable secular regimes along its borders; today, the ruling circles of the People’s Republic of China look at Central Asian countries as a breeding ground of Islamic radicals. Beijing can hardly welcome Central Asian states’ sympathy toward the separatist forces operating in Xinjiang; there is a firm conviction that its Central Asian neighbors are open to manipulation of the other great powers.

According to the logic of the most conservative part of the Washington establishment, preserving the U.S. primacy in the region under review and realizing its national interests requires “bestowing on the United States asymmetric economic advantages over others; creating new preferential trading arrangements that consciously exclude China; recreating a technology-control regime involving U.S. allies that prevents China from acquiring military and strategic capabilities; concertedly building up the power-political capacities of U.S. friends and allies on China’s periphery; and improving the capability of U.S. military forces” in Central Asia,⁸ etc.

According to prominent analysts, China’s presence in Central Asia does not threaten America’s interests, however further expansion of its interests in Central and South Asia is potentially fraught with serious consequences because “Washington confronts a wide range of daunting security challenges abroad and tight fiscal constraints on defense spending at home.”⁹

The United States is especially worried by China’s jealous suspicions of all sorts of strategic cooperation along the Washington-Delhi line.

The new National Security Strategy of the United States speaks about “a strategic convergence with **India’s** Act East policy and our continued implementation of the rebalance to Asia and the Pacific”¹⁰ and says that the United States should “continue to work with both India and Pakistan to

⁷ A. Nathan, “The Chinese Question in Central Asia: Domestic Order, Social Change, and the Chinese Factor,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 6, 2014.

⁸ R. Blackwill, A. Tellis, *Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China*, Council on Foreign Relations Special Report. No. 72, March 2015, Washington, New York, 2015; R.D. Blackwill, A.J. Tellis, “A New U.S. Grand Strategy towards China,” 13 April, 2015, available at [www.nationalinterest.org].

⁹ A. Scobell, F. Ratner, M. Beckley, *China’s Strategy Toward South and Central Asia. An Empty Fortress*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif, 2014, p. 79.

¹⁰ *National Security Strategy*, February 2015 [www.whitehouse.gov].

promote strategic stability, combat terrorism, and advance regional economic integration in South and Central Asia.” This speaks of America’s relative tolerance of what India is doing in the region.

The Washington administration considers the recent events on **Russia’s** western borders to be a threat to the fundamental principles of inviolability of borders and territorial integrity, as well as the inalienable right of people to decide their own future. One of the American top officials said in this connection that “countries should be able to decide for themselves with whom they want to associate and what the basic decisions are about their future.”¹¹

There is also an opinion in Washington that “Russia, which of course has deep historical and economic ties to Central Asia ... will continue to be a major economic force in the region. At the same time, Central Asia states need the space to make their own decisions on how to further their economic development, preserve their political autonomy, and deepen their integration with global markets.”¹²

The U.S. relies on all sorts of official and semi-official media to describe the EurAsEC as excessively politicized and, at the same time, tries to arrange Central Asian support of the Minsk Agreements and other political processes.

Turkey’s chances of spreading its influence in Central Asia are limited by the riots in the Turkish capital and elsewhere to the support of the pro-Turkish lobby, as well as the involvement of citizens of Central Asian countries in the pan-Turkic structures. It should be said that American experts remind us from time to time that Prime Minister of Turkey Özal talked about a Turkic dream (a United Turkish Republic) while watching the Soviet Union fall apart.

So far, the Central Asian capitals respond to the progress of the Lausanne talks on the **Iranian** nuclear file with a declarative and cautious approval of “complete liquidation of weapons of mass destruction,” “comprehensive non-proliferation regime,” etc. This can be interpreted as a manifestation of the traditional mistrust of the policies pursued by official Tehran and their active determination to oppose the threat of armed confrontation on their borders, the effects of which might be too catastrophic. This explains their de-facto support of the efforts of the Six, the United States in particular.

It should be said that the hopes kindled in the newly independent Central Asian republics and supported by the United States that Iran might become the gates to sea routes in Europe and Asia did not come true: Iran was ostracized, demonized, and marginalized.

Today, their positions are not uniform (even if we push aside the intermediate results of the Lausanne process); they are inscribed into a triangle of sorts, the sides of which are formed by Iran, which does not want the stronger position of the United States, the countries that would prefer to lift economic sanctions (with the exception of the Caspian states), and the United States. The local leaders expect it to actively oppose the gradually spreading religious extremism of ISIS.

The United States still considers Iran to be a sluice for Europe, as well as a gateway to India within the context of the events it initiated earlier.

Taking Local Specifics into Account

When talking about international relations in Central Asia, top American officials refer to Byzantium: “Why is this important? The European heritage with its government structures and social

¹¹ “State’s Blinken on a Vision for Central Asia. Remarks by Antony J. Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State,” Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C., 31 March, 2015, U.S. Department of State, available at [www.state.gov].

¹² “The New Silk Road Post-2014: Challenges and Opportunities,” Assistant Secretary Nisha Desai Biswal, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs; The Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State, available at [www.state.gov].

contracts flows from the Western Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment; whereas the Russo-Soviet heritage flows in nearly a direct line from the Byzantine Empire.”¹³

America regards Central Asia as one of the least economically integrated regions and as an entity of states with conflicting national interests and differentiated development models that, on the whole, shows no enthusiasm over American values. This and the fact that much, including the implementation of generally accepted international standards, depends on the political will of leaders does not prevent the U.S. from pursuing its strategic interests through cooperation with all the countries in the region.

Today, the collapsed oil prices, devalued national currency, negative ratings supplied by Western rating agencies, etc. might make **Kazakhstan**, which totally depends on oil, more responsive to China’s greater influence in the region. On the other hand, these negative factors might whip up diversification efforts, widen foreign policy choices, and finally end Kazakhstan’s dependence on its neighbors.

The White House invariably refers to the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United States of America, signed on 20 February, 2015 in Washington, as an illustration of the nature of bilateral relations. It is the first document of this sort signed by the United States with a Central Asian country.

The sides treat the document as a tool for strengthening their ability to fight drug trafficking, slave trade, terrorism, religious extremism, and money laundering.¹⁴

The signing of the treaty was intended to demonstrate to the other Central Asian countries that closer cooperation with the United States in this sphere was possible, and even necessary. Washington is obviously interested in continued cooperation with Astana in the wide-scale state English language programs and cooperation between the state structures of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the universities of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, Duke University, the Federal Executive Institute (FEI) in Charlottesville, etc. This is done with the expectation that American university graduates will find it easier to coopt into the Kazakhstan elite and widen the cooperation between the Civil Service Agency of Kazakhstan and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Washington is talking about educating young people from Afghanistan at Kazakhstan’s higher educational establishments to plant in their minds the values of the new elite. There is every reason to believe that in the near future Afghanistan, into which billions of Western aid have been poured and which is faithfully following the lead of the United States, will become a “shop-window of consistent progress” in the sub-region of South and Central Asia.

The United States will help Kazakhstan join the WTO (this event is scheduled for 2015) and promote its cooperation with Kyrgyzstan in this respect.

At the same time, Astana’s sporadic claims of regional leadership tacitly supported by Washington, which feigns tolerance for Kazakhstan’s integration initiatives, were pushed to the background by President Putin’s statement about the absence of statehood among the Kazakhs in the past, probably grossly misinterpreted by the media.

The geopolitical balance of power in the region is somehow readjusted by Washington’s sporadic attempts to draw Astana into the developments in the east of Ukraine to help deescalate the situation.

¹³ “Central Asia: What’s Next?” Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard E. Hoagland, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs; Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 30 March, 2015, U.S. Department of State, available at [www.state.gov].

¹⁴ See: “Signing of a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty between the United States and Kazakhstan,” Washington, D.C., 20 February, 2015, U.S. Department of State [www.state.gov].

When talking about **Tajikistan**, American experts point to corruption in the corridors of power, security structures, etc. as the main threats.¹⁵

Corruption is especially obvious in the production and export of raw materials; it is gradually undermining the ruling regime, while the resultant instability is leading to the emergence of Islamic extremism.

The problem of drug trafficking cannot but cause concern among the republic's neighbors, together with the fact that Dushanbe prefers to deal with it singlehandedly without involving its neighbors. The Western media point out that, not infrequently, Tajikistan relies on international anti-narcotic structures. This limits the circle of drug trafficking groups and concentrates the profits produced inside it.

American experts warn that the country's stability might be undermined by the huge number of labor migrants returning from Russia and doing nothing for the country's GDP and per capita income (which will inevitably affect the religious situation). The situation is negatively affected by the growing demonization of Tajikistan as a failed state and unreliable partner.¹⁶

There is a threat of Dushanbe's unpredictable behavior in relation to Afghanistan and the "new" Iran; suffice it to say that the country supported Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Tashkent's fairly ambiguous position on Dushanbe's continued augmentation of its military potential makes the regional context even more complicated.¹⁷

For Washington, **Kyrgyzstan** has been and remains the regional beacon of parliamentary democracy, which makes relations with it one of its priorities in the region.

It is the place where America is implementing, with fairly dubious results, its numerous projects designed to develop efficient regional institutions capable of planting "common international rules" in local soil.

According to Washington, Bishkek and Astana, but not Tashkent, Dushanbe, or Ashghabad, are doing a lot to put an end to violent extremism and to contribute to the American initiatives to stem financial flows and discontinue conscription into the ISIS. The two countries' success is explained by their relatively milder religiosity, which makes them less responsive to the ideas of religious extremists.

The United States is convinced that it should continue its close cooperation with Kyrgyzstan "to combat narcotics trafficking ... cooperate in fighting corruption ... investigate financial crimes ... and implement the law enforcement reform." An important role in their cooperation belongs to the Kyrgyz USAID offices and the Peace Corps.¹⁸

Some American experts think that Russia, which intends to build new hydropower stations in Kyrgyzstan, is driven by its own interests and the desire to keep the region disunited.

On the other hand, the countries situated in the basins of local rivers have learned to meander between Moscow and Washington; they believe that CASA-1000 alternatives will allow Afghan farmers to switch from opium poppy to other crops.

The United States is of the following opinion about the widening Eurasian Union and Kyrgyzstan's membership in it: "The expansion of the Eurasian Economic Union, for example, should not come at the expense of countries fulfilling their existing international commitments, including commitments to the World Trade Organization, nor restrict their ability to enter into other bilateral or multilateral trade relationships."¹⁹

¹⁵ See: R. Legvold, "State Erosion: Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 2, 2014.

¹⁶ See: K. Johnson, "Central Asia's Cheap Oil Double Whammy", *Foreign Policy*, 3 March, 2015.

¹⁷ See: J. Mankoff, Op. cit.

¹⁸ See: "Joint Statement on the Third U.S.-Kyrgyz Republic Annual Bilateral Consultations," Washington, D.C., 17 April, 2015 // U.S. Department of State, available at [www.state.gov].

¹⁹ "The New Silk Road Post-2014..."

When talking about **Uzbekistan**, the top officials say that there is “the right balance of pressure, partnership, and a certain amount of strategic patience in how change can take place.”²⁰

The United States is convinced that Uzbekistan has adequate intellectual potential to promote business activities, innovational economic growth, etc. On the whole, its positive attitude to the results of the parliamentary (2014) and the presidential (2015) elections in Uzbekistan means that Washington approved the country’s rejection of “the false choices imposed by anyone else” and its desire to continue its multivectoral foreign and economic policy. It seems that the U.S. will encourage Uzbekistan’s involvement in the Northern Distribution Network.

The image of **Turkmenistan** as Russia’s unreliable partner makes the country a welcome partner of the West. The United States still backs the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline; it wants, among other things, to diversify the flows of Turkmen natural gas to new South Asian markets.

There are other factors which contribute to stability in the relationship between Turkmenistan and the United States.

Conclusion

The sociopolitical and socioeconomic processes in the Central Asian republics and Afghanistan, the confrontation between Russia and the West, the new Chinese initiatives backed by considerable funding, the Lausanne process, the very specific nature of democratization in Turkey, the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, etc. call for reinterpretation of America’s presence in the region.

It seems that in the last few years, the Obama Administration has finally arrived at the conclusion that the Anglo-Saxon model of power is not enough to plant democracy in any country. It should primarily be supported by economic infrastructures, an indispensable political context, judicial reform, etc., which takes time and requires consistent efforts. Washington remains as contradictory and inconsistent as ever; not infrequently, its well-balanced approaches and rational decisions are devalued by ideologically biased statements.

It has to take into account the fact that the Muslim world suspects that the present U.S. Administration cannot resolve the Israeli-Palestinian problem. We should also bear in mind the still loud echo of the recent events in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, and other Arab countries, that is, along the “arc of instability” stretching from North Africa to Afghanistan, which has caused, to a certain extent, domestic political conflicts in the Central Asian countries.

The United States should take into account that, in light of what is going on in Syria and Iraq, the attitude to America as the main superpower that proved unable to pursue its strategy in the Muslim world is gradually changing from positive to negative among the people living in Central Asia.

All the Central Asian republics, on the whole, pursue a well-balanced foreign policy in their relations with Russia, the United States, and other power centers. The Central Asian capitals proceed from Moscow’s and Washington’s continuing common determination to put an end to radical extremism and uproot drug production. They still demonstrate common approaches to the way many topical problems of international security should be resolved or, to use the latest term, the “so-called principle of ‘compartmentalization’ which allows countries to confront each other on some issues and to cooperate productively on others.” It seems that, in the future, this will help consolidate the regional security system with due account of the national interests of all the Central Asian states.

²⁰ S. Swerdlow, A. Stroehlein, “Uzbekistan and the American Myth of ‘Strategic Patience’,” 28 January, 2015, available at [www.eurasianet.org].

Much more attention should be paid to the so-called “medium-sized” states (Iran and Turkey), which are part of the regional agenda. The fact that the armed opposition has found a safe haven in Pakistan and there is a need to preserve regional security demands that the U.S. administration should clearly trace the routes of official relations with Islamabad. Drawing even closer to the Central Asian countries, the closest neighbors of Afghanistan, might help the United States to realize its plans.

On the whole, however, Central Asia is not one of the foreign policy priorities, although the United States’ interest in the region might, in the mid term, come to the fore to acquire just as much urgency as the need to preserve global security.

These interests should be constantly readjusted because the region is attracting numerous global threats and challenges (territorial, ethnonational, religious, ecological, etc.).
