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REGIONAL SECURITY

THE WEST AND POST-SOVIET CENTRAL EURASIA: CERTAIN ASPECTS OF AMERICAN AND EU SECURITY STRATEGY IN THE REGION

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Introduction

The threat of a wide-scale armed attack on the United States and its European allies disappeared together with the Soviet Union. The post-Soviet space, however, became a zone of what can be described as "sustained political instability" and a source of new challenges on the Western agenda. Moreover, the new geopolitical entity and energy resources in its territory became a target of rivalry of the world powers. This meant that merely winning the Cold War was not enough: the victors needed a new strategy in the post-Soviet territory.

Here I intend to outline some of the special features of the American and EU security strategy in Central Eurasia,[1] their key security interests in the region and policy aimed at realization of these interests.

[1] Here I am referring to the conception of Central Eurasia and Central Europe suggested by Eldar Ismailov, who includes three post-Soviet regions in the political make-up of Central Eurasia: Central Europe—Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine; the Central Caucasus—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia; and Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (for more detail, see: E.M. Ismailov, "Central Eurasia: Its Geopolitical Function in the 21st Century," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (50), 2008, pp. 7-29).

The Western Tandem in Central Eurasia

First of all I want to turn to the question why within the framework of the problem studied in this article I tend to contemplate these actors as a tandem, although, of course, each of them may have their own specific interests in the region and political activity stemming from this.

First, the social and axiological identity of the European Union and the United States created by the fact that they belong to the same civilizational community (Western civilization, to borrow the term from Samuel Huntington) looks especially important in the context of their common security. A social and axiological community, however, cannot "remove" the fairly static (material) factors, such as geographic proximity/remoteness. The geographic proximity of Central Eurasia makes the European Union much more concerned about security issues, while the geographic remoteness of the United States makes it much less concerned. At the same time, if not conducive to absolutely identical ideas about security, shared values are responsible at least for the two actors' common approaches to and standard assessments of which phenomena/processes can be described as real/potential threats and to what extent and priority. The way Western societies are responding to the transnational security threat can be used as a pertinent example.

In Europe and the United States, the entire set of environmental issues or, for instance, the problems created by international organized crime have developed into permanent and real security issues irrespective of their geographic proximity/remoteness. The same applies to the issues related to the proliferation of democracy, human rights, and the market economy expected to create a context indispensable for a sustainable, conflict-free, and prosperous political environment.

The economic and technological development of the EU and the U.S. has left its imprint on their ideas about security. Both can be described as models of post-industrialism complete with the common standards of the outside world securitization (including the energy security issues which are rapidly coming to the fore).

Second, the two actors have NATO as a common security mechanism which survived the Cold War and preserved the de facto status of a collective security system. The U.S. and EU jointly respond to external threats and are involved in military operations designed to prevent such threats (including outside the Alliance's responsibility zone).

Their common security standards and shared security mechanism suggest that the EU and the United States can be regarded as a real political tandem rather than two political actors who pooled forces ad hoc on the "Central Eurasian chessboard." Their different degrees of proximity to Central Eurasia are balanced out by their common security standards and mechanisms. Their impact on the region's security system should be assessed accordingly even though specific geographical aspects and the actors' different global political statuses do not allow us to look at the motivations of their involvement in the region as absolutely identical. Based on the geographical specifics, only the European Union can be related to the security system of Central Eurasia, while the United States, the only superpower, should be regarded in the context of its inevitable global involvement.

By moving eastward, the EU came in direct geographic contact with Central Eurasia. Having integrated Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Rumania in 2004 and 2007, the European Union acquired a 3,172-km border with the region's European part (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine).[2]

[2] Calculated from *CIA—The World Factbook 2010.*

- This means that, first, the ethnoterritorial issues the new EU members shared with the three Soviet-successor states became part of the European agenda.
- Second, the EU's eastward expansion liquidated the buffer zone that separated the EU from political instability and conflicts in the post-Soviet space and related threats (of a transnational nature among other things), such as international organized crime, international terrorism, illegal migration, drug trafficking, etc.
- Third, the configuration of geopolitical ties between the EU and Russia, the key power factor of the post-Soviet space, also changed. Two successive waves (in 2004 and 2007) brought the European Union into the sphere of Russia's vital interests and into places (the Baltic and Poland) directly on the Russian borders. Concerned with the EU's expansion into the post-Soviet space and the desire of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and certain other newly independent states to join the European Union, Moscow responded with actions spearheaded against these states and the EU.

The so-called gas conflict (Moscow's attempts to use energy resources to put pressure on the post-Soviet space and the EU) can be described as a glaring example that the security issue became one of the linchpins of the *EU-Central Eurasian newly independent states-Russia* vector.[3] Suspension of gas deliveries to Europe and Moscow's obvious intention to monopolize the oil and gas transportation sphere in the post-Soviet space, coupled with Gazprom's attempts to gain control over Europe's gas distribution system, only made the European Union more determined to end its dependence on gas supplies from Russia by diversifying oil and gas transportation lines outside Russia.

At the same time, an analysis of Europe's involvement in Central Eurasia and its functional expediency in the context of its security relations with other actors casts doubts on the EU's competence as a single holder of interests and an agent of corresponding policy. The degree of integration achieved so far is hardly enough to describe the European Union as a state or a power. The Theory of Regional Complexes Security gives the European Union a chance to develop from an "institutional" regional security complex[4] into a closer-knit political actor.[5] Today, however, this is a prospect rather than reality, which creates numerous questions. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, formulated three of them: "Is the EU able to take care of its own security without dependence on external powers? What are the interregional security dynamics between EU-Europe and its neighboring complexes? And to what extent and in what ways does the EU appear at the global level as a power of sorts?"[6] This explains, among other things, why I regard the EU as part of the U.S.-EU tandem despite their very different geopolitical connections with Central Eurasia.

The United States has no common borders with Central Eurasia, yet today, very much as throughout the entire post-Soviet period, its presence there is much more tangible than that of Europe.

America's global presence, explained by its interests far and wide beyond all geographic limits and its capabilities of projecting its influence on a global scale, is enough to take its role in the functioning and development of the Central Eurasian system into account. This explains why the interests of the two entities of Western civilization (united Europe and the United States) are described as relatively identical, the latter playing the first fiddle. From time to time, this pushes the

[3] Here I have in mind the gas conflict with Ukraine which flared up in 2005 when Russia suspended natural gas deliveries to the Ukrainian and European consumers.

[4] See: B. Buzan, O. Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 62.

[5] See: B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era.* Second Edition, Lynne Rienner Publishers Boulder, Colorado, 1991, pp. 218-219; B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. de Wilde, *Security. A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers Boulder, London, 1998, p. 12.

[6] B. Buzan, O. Wæver, op. cit., p. 373.

seemingly common (transnational) problems which the Western tandem seeks to resolve into a geopolitical context.[7]

The Key Security Interests

Disintegration of the Soviet Union put the problem of the vast Soviet nuclear heritage on the American and European security agenda. Tactical nuclear armaments were promptly moved to the Russian Federation, but an enormous number of strategic warheads remained in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine.[8] In view of the political and social-economic difficulties, the problem of safety of the Soviet "nuclear heritage" came to the fore. Indeed, these arsenals might be captured by so-called "rogue states" or non-state extremist groups, which explains why the West deemed it necessary to be involved in the post-Soviet space.[9]

Luckily, disintegration of the former Soviet space was stemmed and Russia's nuclear potential was never divided.[10] The people in power in Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan agreed to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty and either to transfer their nuclear arsenals to Russia or liquidate them to become non-nuclear states. By December 2001, the process was completed.[11]

On the whole, the Soviet nuclear heritage issue was resolved, while the problem of nuclear non-proliferation in the post-Soviet space has not yet been removed from the Western agenda. The region borders on the obviously anti-Western countries or, to be more exact, ties them together. Their geopolitical interconnection might lead to illegal cooperation in the nuclear sphere.

Since the mid-2000s, the Iranian nuclear file has remained in the center of relations between the U.S. and EU, on the one side, and Iran, on the other. The nature of the Iranian political regime,[12] its oil and gas riches, and the related geopolitical problems,[13] as well as ballistic missiles (which cannot be dismissed as another point on the Western agenda), easily account for the tandem's close attention.

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[7] The problem is not limited to the United States' ability to use its European partners to realize its geopolitical interests. It is important to take into account how America's rivals (Russia and China) respond to America's leadership in the Western tandem. Not infrequently, they perceive everything the West is doing as another "American geopolitical project." This downplays the role of the EU as a holder of its own interests in the eyes of other actors. In the absence of military-political mechanisms of their own, the Europeans have to follow in the footsteps of the United States, even if they are not interested enough in this or that aspect of Central Eurasian policy.

[8] See: J. Simpson, "Nuclear Non-Proliferation in the Post-Cold War Era," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Vol. 70, Issue 1, 1994, p. 27. By the time the Soviet Union fell apart, the main elements of strategic and nuclear infrastructure and the larger part of the strategic nuclear weapons were concentrated in the RF. Ukraine had 130 launchers for UR-100HU (SS-19) and 46 launching silos for RT-23 UTTH missiles (SS-24), 19 Tu-160 bombers; 25 Tu-9MC, and 2 Tu-95 bombers. In Belarus, there were 81 Topol ground missile sites (SS-25.) In Kazakhstan, there were 104 launching silos for R-36MUTTH/P-36M2 (SS-18) missiles and 40 Tu-95MC bombers (see: "Strategicheskie iadernye sily SSSR i Rossii," available at [http://www.armscontrol.ru/course/rsf/p9.htm]).

[9] See, for example: S.E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers. A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Curzon Press, Surrey, 2001, p. 367; R. Sokolsky, T. Charlick-Paley, *NATO and Caspian Security. A Mission Too Far?* Rand Corporation, Washington, 1999, p. 7; Ch. Fairbanks, C.R. Nelson, S.F. Starr, K. Weisbrode, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia*, The Atlantic Council of the United States, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C., 2001, p. 11.

[10] The West feared that other nuclear countries, including the Russian Federation itself, might fall apart; after all, in the early 1990s, the RF was living though a fairly unstable period in its history (see: J. Simpson, op. cit., p. 27).

[11] See: "Strategicheskie iadernye sily SSSR i Rossii."

[12] The Iranian regime is determined to stand opposed to Western values.

[13] The political motivation for control over Iran's huge oil and gas resources fits the logic of the developed countries' mounting competition over gradually depleting energy resources and their efforts to oppose Russia's attempts to use gas and oil against the West.

The fact that Iran cooperates with other powers, Russia and China in particular, in the nuclear sphere adds to the tension.

Today, about 300 Russian enterprises are involved in the Bushehr nuclear power station project.[14] The Russian Federation insists that its cooperation with Iran is of a purely peaceful nature and that it does not want another nuclear state on its southern borders; there is no, the Russians argue, indication that Tehran intends to violate its nonproliferation obligations to become another nuclear power.[15] America, in turn, believes that this cooperation adds to Iran's scientific and technical knowledge and moves Tehran closer to nuclear weapons.[16]

The United States and its European allies are exerting great efforts, so far to little effect, to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Acting in accordance with the Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000,[17] they introduced sanctions against the companies (mainly Chinese and Russian) cooperating with Tehran in the nuclear sphere.[18] From time to time, they threaten to use military force against Iran and demonstrate their military might in the Persian Gulf.

Central Eurasia is more than a geopolitical link between the main "nuclear rivals" of the West; it is one of the most unstable political zones on the Eurasian continent that emanates the threat of WMD proliferation and other (non-traditional) challenges: international organized crime and terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal migration. The very fact that most of the local states are fairly weak explains the instability and frequent conflicts, as well as the high possibility of the local threats spreading to neighboring regions.

The post-Soviet history of Central Eurasia abounds in conflicts of all types and intensity. In the late 1990s, Zbigniew Brzezinski coined the term "the Eurasian Balkans" (in keeping with the analogy of "the traditional Balkans" of the early 1990s) to describe the south of the post-Soviet space.[19] The term will remain valid as long as the territory continues to be dotted with unsettled armed conflicts.

Today, the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia are described as frozen, while these territories de facto remain outside national (Azerbaijani, Moldovan, and Georgian, respectively) or international control. The fact that there has been no large-scale fighting since the mid-1990s[20] does nothing to reduce the "negative" effect of the lack of control "in peace time" there. "All secessionist regions represent challenges and security risks in the hard security field, as they constitute growing threats of resumed military violence in the region and contribute to state weakness, hampering economic and democratic development in the South Caucasus and Moldova. However, a wide range of soft security issues are also connected to the unresolved conflicts, as these constitute a form of uncontrolled free trade zones."[21]

These regions have huge amounts of military equipment outside the international quotas set by the CFE Treaty for the simple reason that the "frozen" zones are controlled by actors with no

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[14] See: V.E. Novikov, *Problema nerasprostraneniia iadernogo oruzhiia na sovremennom etape*, Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, Moscow, 2007, p. 229.

[15] See: *Ugrozy rezhimu nerasprostraneniia iadernogo oruzhiia na Blizhnem i Srednem Vostoke.*, ed. by A. Arbatov, V. Naumkin, Moscow Carnegie Center, Moscow, 2005, p. 25.

[16] See: V.E. Novikov, op. cit., p. 231.

[17] Since 2005, Iran and Syria Nonproliferation Act.

[18] A list of these companies can be found on the U.S. Department of State's official website (see: *Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000*, U.S. Department of State, available at [http://www.state.gov/t/isn/c15234.htm]).

[19] See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. 123.

[20] The conflict in South Ossetia was "defrosted" in August 2008 by the Russian-Georgian crisis, which developed into wide-scale hostilities.

[21] S. Cornell, A. Jonsson, N. Nilsson, P. Häggström, *The Wider Black Sea Region; An Emerging Hub in European Security*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, Washington and Uppsala, 2006, p. 51.

legal and internationally recognized functions. In some places, the amount of illegal military equipment exceeds that of the states from which these areas are trying to escape with the use of these weapons.

Lack of control has encouraged illegal trade in arms, drugs, and people, as well as money laundering.[22] Because of its relative proximity to the EU borders and Odessa, one of the Ukrainian Black Sea ports, Transnistria has succeeded more than the others in illegal arms trade and should, therefore, be described as the greatest hazard in Europe in this respect.[23] Though relatively far removed from the borders of the Western tandem, the uncontrolled Caucasian zones are causing a lot of concern in Europe and America as potential zones of illegal trade in military materials. Moreover, certain facts point to the possibility that trade in components bought in Russia which could potentially be used to create nuclear weapons might flourish in these uncontrolled territories. In February 2006, a group of people headed by Russian citizen Oleg Khinsagov was detained in Georgia when they tried to smuggle 100 grams of enriched uranium into Georgia across the South Ossetian stretch of its border with Russia.[24]

Iran is not the only country on the Western lists of potential nuclear actors. There is another serious treat: terrorist groups might lay their hands on nuclear technology or materials to be used to attack American and European cities. The 9/11 events not only added urgency to the issue of international terrorism in the West, but also pushed forward the threat of nuclear terrorism: terrorists might either acquire nuclear charges from rogue-states or gain access to nuclear weapons by chance.

The "uncontrolled zones" and the "corridors of illegal activities" are not the only factors of nuclear threat in Central Eurasia. There is any number of extremist groups operating in this space up to and including al-Qa'eda, No. 1 on the list of extremist organizations compiled by the United States and its European allies. It is believed to be behind the 9/11 terrorist acts. The counterterrorist coalition, which used every possibility supplied by the Central Asian newly independent states, is still fighting it in Afghanistan. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, operating in the region, is also on the list of terrorist organizations, along with certain other movements which reject Euro-American values and Western policies in the developing world (Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Muslim Brothers, etc.).

There is any number of actors in Central Eurasia that might seek nuclear weapons to use against the West, and the region offers many chances. First, it borders on several nuclear powers—Russia, China, India, and Pakistan—which, in principle, might serve as a source of illegal supplies of nuclear weapons or their components from their inadequately guarded nuclear facilities. The report supplied by the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University dealing with prevention of nuclear terrorism pointed out that in terms of unsanctioned access to nuclear facilities, Russia and Pakistan pose some of the world's most urgent risks of nuclear theft.[25]

Second, seen from the West, the Central Asian newly independent states look like a possible source of WMD components. In October 2005, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chair of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia (the Committee on Foreign Affairs), stated: "Major U.S. security interests have included the elimination of nuclear weapons remaining after the collapse of the

[22] See: S. Cornell, A. Jonsson, N. Nilsson, P. Häggström, op. cit.

[23] The Transnistrian region has enough production facilities; since 1996 it has been producing arms and ammunition exported to Kosovo, Chechnia, Abkhazia, and the Arab countries. In 2003, co-rapporteurs of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Jossette Durrieu and Lauri Vahtre, emphasized the threat represented by arms trafficking in the Transnistrian region (see: B. Radulescu, "The Transnistria 'Republic' and Illegal Arms Export," *EuropeFront News*, 2 January, 2007, available at [http://www.europefront.com/news/267/the_transnistria_republic_and_illegal_arms_export.html]).

[24] See: M. Bunn, "Securing the Bomb 2007," Project on Managing the Atom, Harvard University, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Cambridge, MA, 2007, p. 17, available at [http://www.nti.org/e_research/securingthebomb07.pdf].

[25] See: Ibid., p. 25.

Soviet bloc. There are active research reactors, uranium mines, milling facilities, and nuclear waste dumps in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, many of which reportedly remain inadequately protected. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan reportedly had significant chemical and biological warfare facilities during the Soviet era. U.S. efforts to dismantle chem-bio and nuclear facilities in the region to prevent terrorists from procuring these deadly weapons are a priority concern for this Subcommittee."[26]

The events of 9/11 pushed the problem of international terrorism, whether nuclear or not, to the fore in the West. The terrorist acts in the United States demonstrated that the threat can be only partly limited by geographic remoteness.[27] Terrorist organizations can deliver strikes at the United States and its European allies from control centers stationed at considerable distances from the targets. The terrorist acts in the United States and later in Spain in March 2004 and Great Britain in July 2005 revealed Western vulnerability to this asymmetric threat and the vital necessity for the West to address the threat collectively up to and including the use of military force.

International terrorism and other non-traditional threats were not the only challenges in the 2000s: the West became aware of the need to ensure its energy security. It became abundantly clear that fuel supplies and dependence on energy resources were on the geopolitical and security agenda.

United Europe has been exposed to the logic of new energy geopolitics to a much greater extent than the rest of the world. The post-Soviet space, or rather Russia and its "energy policy," proved to be in the epicenter of the new threats. According to Svante Cornell and other authors, Russia's "energy policy" rested on the following elements: "state control over the production of gas for export; keeping a monopoly on acquiring Central Asian gas at cheap prices; achieving increasing dominance over the European consumer markets; and utilizing dominance over both the import and export to CIS countries of gas for political purposes."[28]

Suspension of gas supplies to Ukraine and the EU countries in 2005-2009 and the Kremlin's attempts to monopolize the gas market of the post-Soviet space showed the Russian Federation not only to be an unreliable supplier, but also its obvious intention to realize its geopolitical interests in Eurasia through the post-Soviet dependence of the European Union on Russian gas, which can be described as considerable.[29]

Not directly dependent on fuel supplies from the post-Soviet space, Washington is also worried about the rapidly increasing geopolitical value of energy resources and particularly about the intention of its formerly mighty rival to restore its domination in the post-Soviet territory. Indeed, monopolization of the post-Soviet oil and gas sphere could have affected the world fuel market, with negative results for the American economy. Washington had its eye on the recently transformed post-Soviet space, Central Asia and the Caspian region, as a source of energy that might lower its dependence on the Persian Gulf long before the United States became involved in energy-related collisions with Russia.[30]

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[26] See: *U.S. Security Concerns in Central Asia*, Opening Statement of Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chair, Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia Hearing, 26 October, 2005 (quoted from: A. Ibrahim, "Evolving United States Policy toward the Caspian Region: A Delicate Balance," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (46), 2007, p. 38).

[27] See: O. Oliker, "Conflict in Central Asia and South Caucasus: Implications of Foreign Interests and Involvement," in: *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Implication for the U.S. Army*, ed. by O. Oliker, Th.S. Szayna, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2003, p. 223.

[28] S. Cornell, A. Jonsson, N. Nilsson, P. Häggström, op. cit., p. 76.

[29] Russia delivers about 46% of European imports of natural gas and 17% of oil (see: N. Norling, "EU's Central Asia Policy: The Adoption of a New Strategy Paper 2007-2013," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (45), 2007, p. 11; A. Burkhanov, "The EU Strategy in Central Asia: Successes and Failures," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (45), 2007, p. 21).

[30] See, for example: R. Burnashev, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects," in: *Central Asia. A Gathering Storm?* ed. by B. Rumer, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2002, p. 116; R. Sokolsky, T. Charlick-Paley, op. cit., p. 69; O. Oliker, op. cit., p. 221; Ch. Fairbanks, C.R. Nelson, S.F. Starr, K. Weisbrode, op. cit., p. 98.

No matter how dependent the European Union becomes on Russia, the situation is fraught with grave strategic repercussions for the United States.

First, this might undermine the united European-American strategy in Eurasia which, along with other reasons, will limit America's geopolitical capabilities in the post-Soviet space. Second, after acquiring control over the post-Soviet energy and communication sphere, Russia could essentially restore its domination over the newly independent states. This might help to restore a Soviet-type empire or create a wide coalition (alliance) of the pro-Russian states. Back in the mid-1990s, Zbigniew Brzezinski formulated, in detail, the main geopolitical imperative of America's strategy in post-Soviet Eurasia: "Perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism … and prevent the emergence of a hostile coalition … that could eventually seek to challenge America"s primacy."[31] This might prove unrealizable if Russia's energy geopolitics proves successful.

The EU and its trans-Atlantic ally might be negatively affected if the post-Soviet oil and gas sphere acquires geopolitical dimensions amid the worldwide depletion of energy sources. The Energy Diplomacy and Security Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 2007 is very indicative in this respect. It says among other things: "It is imperative to the national security and prosperity of the United States to have reliable, affordable, clean, sufficient, and sustainable sources of energy."[32] Senator Richard Lugar, one of its authors, said in 2006 at the NATO Riga summit: "In the coming decades, the most likely source of armed conflict in the European theater and the surrounding regions will be energy scarcity and manipulation. It would be irresponsible for NATO to decline involvement in energy security, when it is abundantly apparent that the jobs, health, and security of our modern economies and societies depend on the sufficiency and timely availability of diverse energy resources."[33]

Since Russia's "energy policy" creates more dangerous risks for Europe, it is much more pertinent to say that the EU should be more involved in Central Eurasia. For the United States, nevertheless, it also became a stimulus for the active involvement in the region that emanates traditional and new security threats. The ideological background of the end of the Cold War was very favorable for the West and its strategic activity. The same is true of the newly independent states and the international community. Western strategic activities looked less related to geopolitics; rather they were geared at successful development of the newly liberated states. In these conditions, the West could use "soft power" to promote its Central Eurasian strategy.

Security Interests Realized

The thesis that the post-Soviet space should be transformed into a zone of strong democratic states with smoothly functioning market economies is not a tribute to the idealism that triumphed in the West after World War II and which is intended mainly for domestic audiences. Neither it is limited to the humanitarian interests of those who won the Cold War. This thesis was expected to guarantee long-term geopolitical pluralism in the post-Soviet space and allow the United States and its allies in Eurasia to set up an "open system geared toward a more transparent and interdependent world"[34] as one of their greater aims.

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[31] Z. Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 198.

[32] See: *Energy Diplomacy and Security Act of 2007*, available at [http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:2:./temp/~c110JBKdrz::].

[33] See: *Richard Lugar Speech in Advance of NATO Summit at Opening Gala Dinner of the Riga Conference*, 27 November, 2006 [http://www.rigasummit.lv/en/id/speechin/nid/36/].

[34] L. Tchantouridze, "Eurasia, Geopolitics, and American Foreign Policy," *Central Asia and the Caucasus,* [1] 5 (53), 2008, p. 15.

The strong, democratic, and economically effective states in the post-Soviet territory are seen, with good reason, in the West as a guarantee that America and Europe will be able to realize all of their interests, viz. prevention and containment of armed conflicts and other threats (WMD proliferation, terrorism, religious extremism, drugs, and illegal migration) in the zones of Western vital interests up to and including stable fuel supplies.

It is not surprising that the West is still talking about the need to support independence, sovereignty, democratic changes, and progress toward a market economy in the newly independent states and their integration into the world political and economic system.[35] This called for a wide range of instruments—money, technical assistance, military training, and coordination of the local countries' armed forces with NATO military structures,[36] political support indispensable when relations between the newly independent states and Russia (or other geopolitical powers) become strained.[37] At times, the West supported, unofficially and undemonstratively, the revolutionary changes in these countries known as the Color Revolutions.

The results were hardly unambiguous; this is especially true of Western efforts to bring democracy to the post-Soviet states, including the Russian Federation: not infrequently, Western zeal reduced to naught the results and efficiency of the West's efforts.

In its approaches to democratization of the newly independent states, America was either too rational, which smacked of double standards, or too ideologically biased and demonstratively tough. As a result the West suffered several painful strategic defeats in Central Eurasia.

In the early 1990s, for example, the United States, determined to prevent proliferation of the Soviet nuclear stockpiles across Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, was also resolved to transform Russia into a democratic state with a functional market economy.[38] Everything else (including similar democratic designs in other newly independent states) was practically ignored or even sacrificed to the "loftier" aim. The "Russia first" policy proved a failure for the simple reason that this encouraged the Kremlin to look at the post-Soviet space as a sphere of its natural domination, while the other Soviet-successor states were left to guess whether the West was determined to support their independence and its "democratic supplements." This policy increased the pro-Russian geopolitical orientation in the newly independent states to the extent that later the West found it much harder to form a sustainable alternative.

In the 2000s, the relatively tougher approaches of the U.S. Republican Administration to the democratic standards in the newly independent states complicated the situation even more. The new American leaders refused to take the real possibilities for democratic transit in the newly independent states into account. This created the Color Revolution phenomenon which engulfed Central Eurasia in 2003-2005 with different results. Strategically, the "revolutionary wave" brought the West both positive and even more negative results.

On the whole, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan[39] created more democratic regimes and increased pro-Western

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[35] This was registered by strategic documents issued in the United States and the EU (see, for example: *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, The White House, Washington, D.C., October 1998. P. 39; *European Community Regional Strategy Paper for Central Asia for the Period 2007-2013*, 15 June, 2006, p. 7, available at [http://www.delkaz.ec.europa.eu/pr/eng/REPOSITORY_assistance/Programmes_and_Projects/Geographic/DCI/CA_CSP&IP_2007-2010/Regional_%20Strategy_Paper_%20CA_2007-13_%20rev_%20june-15-2006_En.pdf]).

[36] The U.S. Foreign Assistance program is one of the pertinent examples; in full accordance with the 1992 Freedom Support Act it was expanded to include the former Soviet republics, the TACIS program initiated by the European Community in 1991, the Partnership for Peace program NATO launched in 1994, and the programs of financial, military and technical assistance to individual countries.

[37] Georgia was supported in August 2008 during the military clash with the RF and Azerbaijan in July 2001 during the Caspian incident which involved Iran.

[38] See: S.E. Cornell, op. cit., p. 367.

[39] We have no reliable information to which extent Washington was involved in these revolutions; anyway, it is not my intention to plunge into a discussion which goes beyond the limits of this article. It was a well known fact that the United

orientation, however the results looked fairly shaky.[40] These changes alarmed the political elites in other post-Soviet states; their leaders (especially in Central Asia) could not but wonder whether the West was nurturing similar plans in relation to their countries. While Georgia and Ukraine, and to a lesser extent Kyrgyzstan, became more pro-Western, the other newly independent states in Central Eurasia demonstrated an opposite trend. To remain in power, their elites had to turn to Russia (which is much less picky when it comes to democratic standards). This produced at best their "balanced" foreign policy course. At times, it brought about stronger pro-Russian biases in these states. This was especially obvious in Uzbekistan where the tension reached its highest point in Andijan in May 2005.

Since 2001, Central Eurasia has been and remains a zone of Western military activity. The United States and its NATO allies responded to 9/11 with a counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan; the Taliban was accused of sheltering international terrorists[41] represented by Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'eda fighters responsible for the terrorist acts in America.

This operation added vigor to cooperation between the United States and the Central Asian and Caucasian countries in the military sphere (in the form of the right of the U.S. Air Force to use their air space and American military bases in their territories).[42] At first, the operation brought together and stirred into action not only the Western countries[43]; its geopolitical rivals in Eurasia caught some of the Western dedication: "The United States has also received unprecedented cooperation from the Russian Federation in this effort… The United States and Russia have exchanged intelligence in support of the counterterrorism fight and have pledged further cooperation in the long term. While many in Russia have continued to express concern at U.S involvement in its 'back yard,' President Putin has been consistent in reiterating that Russia does not oppose the U.S. actions (in Afghanistan.—*J.E.*)."[44]

Since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan the Kremlin's position and its support of the U.S. have become of paramount importance to the United States. The compromise between Washington and Moscow concerning the U.S. military operation and the American bases in Central Asia served the interests of both sides. Together with the military bases in Central Asia, the United States acquired a geopolitical key to the main post-Soviet sector. Russia, which could never accept this in the long term, wanted to defuse the potential threat on its southern borders presented by the Taliban regime.

Cooperation between Russia and the West in Central Eurasia was of a temporary nature riveted to the war in Afghanistan. Neither Russia nor the other regional powers (China and Iran) would have

States hailed the revolutionary changes which produced an impression that it had been involved in them. The Section "Success and Challenges since 2002" of the 2006 National Security Strategy says: "The 'color revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan have brought new hope for freedom across the Eurasian landmass" (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House, Washington, D.C., March 2006, p. 2).

[40] Indeed, in January 2010 Victor Yanukovich, who five years earlier had been an object of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, was elected president. In April 2010 a revolution in Kyrgyzstan removed President Bakiev, one of the leaders of the Tulip revolution of 2005.

[41] See: *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House, Washington, D.C., September 2002, p. 5.

[42] From the very beginning of the military operation against the Taliban, the United States stationed their air forces in Uzbekistan (where the Americans used the Karshi-Khanabad base) and in Kyrgyzstan (at the Manas military base). In 2005, vexed about the mounting tension in its relations with the United States, Tashkent demanded that America withdraw its armed forces from Uzbekistan. In November, America moved its air base to Kyrgyzstan.

[43] Before and after the counterterrorist operation, the West regarded the production and trafficking of drugs as one of the most serious threats coming from Afghanistan stimulating Western involvement in this country and the relatively recent newcomers (the Central Asian Soviet-successor states). In post-Soviet times, this area has become the most promising market and the best transshipment base used by Afghan drug traffickers.

[44] O. Oliker, op. cit., p. 224.

hailed NATO's stronger position in this area. They needed Washington to remove the Taliban and put an end to the non-traditional threats in the form of religious extremism and drug trafficking, of which Afghanistan was the source. They cooperated within these limits, which explains why the geopolitical neutrality of Central Asian players was short-lived. Concerned about the obvious successes scored by ISAF, which disorganized the Taliban and undermined its resistance, and the fact that the country had acquired alternative power structures set up under Western protection, the regional rivals were growing impatient. They demanded that the United States should specify the date of its withdrawal from Central Asian states.

At the SCO summit which took place on 5-6 June, 2005 in Astana, Russia and China demonstrated their unity on the issue of the American military presence in Central Asia. Despite the fact that there was no unanimity on the issue among the Central Asian SCO partners,[45] they, on the whole, agreed with what was said on that score in the summit's Declaration: "Considering the completion of the active military phase of antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan, the member-states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization consider it necessary that respective members of the antiterrorist coalition set a final timeline for their temporary use of the above-mentioned objects of infrastructure and stay of their military contingents on the territories of the SCO member states."[46]

This spoke of rising geopolitical rivalry between the Western tandem and the Russian Federation, which spread far beyond Central Asia. It spread far and wide across the whole of Central Eurasia rather than just some of its regions, while military-strategic interests and the struggle against non-traditional security threats remained intertwined with energy and communication issues.

The Western idea of a new pipeline system in Central Eurasia was suggested by Moscow's intention to turn energy resources into a political instrument, which became obvious in the 2000s. It merely stimulated the West and added vigor to its rivalry with Moscow. The idea that fuel from alternative sources could be brought to the world energy market had been born and developed even before Russia and Ukraine disagreed over gas supplies. It was expected to facilitate integration of the Central Eurasian newly independent states into the world economic system and strengthen their inner stability. By the same token, it was expected to reduce the risk of a new Eurasian empire which would dominate the post-Soviet space and to strengthen geopolitical pluralism in this vast area.

After launching the Interstate Oil and Gas transport to Europe (INOGATE) program in the mid-1990s, which envisaged a pipeline system to bring together the EU with the Caspian fuel-rich countries, the European Union accepted, albeit indirectly, the Caspian as an alternative to the RF to be used to counterbalance its dependence on Russia.[47] However, implementation of this program left much to be desired: Russia was too weak to be perceived as a rival able to use energy resources as an instrument to put pressure on the West; it depended on American and European aid to an extent which ruled out any threat to Europe's energy security in the short term. At that time, increased import of Russian energy resources did not look like a threat; Russia had a ramified energy transportation infrastructure, while it was hardly advisable to build systems outside Russia while fuel prices remained relatively low.

In the late 1990s, however, it became obvious that the West should revise its geopolitical and, later, energy security ideas about the post-Soviet space. The Balkan crisis of 1999[48] put an end to

[45] Kyrgyzstan's approach differed from what the final document said. In October 2005, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reached an agreement during her visit to Kyrgyzstan on moving the American air base from Uzbekistan.

[46] See: *Declaration of the Heads of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, Astana, 6 July, 2005.

[47] See: Th.N. Marketos, "European Energy Security and the Balkans: A Battleground for the U.S.-Russia Struggle for the Geostrategic Control of Eurasia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (53), 2008, p. 57.

[48] NATO's military operation in Yugoslavia launched in 1999 in connection with the Kosovo crisis aroused an unprecedentedly tough response from Moscow and stirred up anti-Western sentiments in Russia.

the honeymoon between Russia and the West; it became clear that Russia could hardly be transformed into the Western-style democracy. It also became clear that Moscow was not going to get rid of ideas about the restoration of its influence in the Soviet periphery; it was no longer expected that relations between Russia and the West could become a "mature strategic partnership" or a "global condominium."[49]

Even before NATO attacked Serbia, relations between Russia and the West had deteriorated mainly because of NATO's eastward expansion. Zbigniew Brzezinski has written that by 1996 the United States had identified a larger and safer Euroatlantic community as its political priority.[50] For obvious reasons, Russia could hardly accept what the United States and its NATO allies were doing. Moscow believed that the idea of a "sanitary cordon" around Russia or, a softer formula, Russia's isolation were coming to the fore in Western policy. Anatoly Utkin wrote the following in this respect: "Strictly speaking, it is not the half a million more soldiers who will join the seven-million strong NATO contingent, three hundred state-of-the-art airdromes on our borders, and control over the territory that was repeatedly used as a springboard to march on Moscow in 1612, 1709, 1812, 1920, and 1941 that is important. What is important is the failure of the course launched by Peter the Great and continued, with a lot of pomp, by the Western-minded democrats in 1988-1993. I have in mind NATO's expansion, which signifies another attempt at isolating our country. This is the West's third attempt in the 20th century to push Russia out of the all-European security system. The Versailles system and the 'sanitary cordon' on our borders can be described as *the first* of such attempts… The Marshall Plan and NATO was *the second*."[51]

In 1997, an alliance of four newly independent states—Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUAM)—with strong Western biases and strong Western support appeared in the post-Soviet space. In 1999, Uzbekistan added another "U" to turn the alliance into GUUAM. Its geopolitical component, which was clearly discerned amid the talk about economic development and democratization, caused a lot of worries in the Kremlin. The West said next to nothing about the "sanitary cordon," however the post-Soviet reality of the latter half of the 1990s supplied ample food for thought.

The Kremlin did not trust the United States, which never concealed its intention to entrench itself in the Caspian regarded by Russia as a sphere of its special interests. In 1997, Washington announced that the area was a sphere of U.S. vital interests and was included in the U.S. Central Command responsibility sphere. This meant that Washington no longer took Russia's special interests in this part of the near abroad into account.[52] It was at the same time that the idea of bringing Azeri oil to the West by circumventing Russia appeared in the form of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline; there was talk about a trans-Caspian pipeline to gain access to the energy resources of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.[53]

Russia, which had recovered after the default of 1998 and where Vladimir Putin and his administration had consolidated the vertical of power, responded with much better organized and tougher anti-Western measures.[54] Relations between Russia and the West were gradually returning to the

[49] Z. Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 98.

[50] See: Ibid., p. 101.

[51] A.I. Utkin, *Mirovoy poriadok XXI veka,* Eksmo, Moscow, 2002, pp. 358-359.

[52] See: M. Laumulin, "U.S. Strategy and Policy in Central Asia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus,* No. 4 (46), 2007, p. 47.

[53] The foreign ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan discussed this in March 1998 (see: A. Bülent, "Turkey's Policy in the Former Soviet South: Assets and Options," *Turkish Studies,* Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 2000, p. 41).

[54] In 2001, the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan brought the West and Russia closer to a certain extent on the anti-Taliban basis, however the "thaw" was short-lived for the reasons discussed above.

ideological confrontation of the half-forgotten Cold War. The Kremlin criticized the West, and America in particular, for its efforts to perpetuate a unipolar world order; its consistent inattention to the U.N.'s multisided mechanisms, air strikes on Serbia, and the war on Iraq. The West responded with scything criticism of Russia: overuse of military force during the second war in Chechnia and strict centralization of power, which the West interpreted as curtailment of the democratic changes and a return to authoritarianism. The United States and its European allies could not help being worried by Moscow's increasingly obvious intention to use the economic instruments at its disposal to put pressure on the newly independent states and by placing its wager on energy geopolitics, which peaked in the Ukraine gas crisis.

The new forms of Russia's geopolitics which affected the strategic interests of the West and, in the case of the European Union, its security called for an adequate response. The West readjusted its idea about Central Eurasia; the changed context called for a much more integral idea and corresponding practical steps in the area. The new ideas and practical steps took the forms of the Greater Central Asia[55] and the Greater Black Sea region[56] conceptions.

Alternative transportation routes were seen as the most adequate response to Russia's energy policy, which means that the West needed a stronger position in the fuel-rich and transit countries as one of the components of its new strategy. To achieve this, it was necessary, first, to increase political, economic, and military-technical support of the most vulnerable newly independent states; second, to establish closer cooperation among these countries and between them and NATO and the EU (including in the energy and transportation spheres) on a bilateral level and within the common West-oriented institutions.

The BTC oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline (commissioned in 2006 and 2007, respectively) could be used to set up routes for transporting Azerbaijani oil and gas; an East-West energy transportation system bypassing Russia designed to hook up Central Asian producers, primarily of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, to this route was seen as the next step.

The fuel-rich countries, in turn, want to lower their present dependence on Russia and to be able to move their hydrocarbons to the West along alternative routes, which explains why, despite Russia's negative attitude to these projects, the Central Asian states are demonstrating their at least partial acceptance of the Western position. In June 2006, the presidents of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan signed an agreement On Promoting Oil Transportation from Kazakhstan via the Caspian and the Territory of Azerbaijan to the World Markets through the BTC System. This meant that Kazakhstan officially joined the pipeline project. It was expected that oil from Kazakhstan would be moved across the sea by tankers to be transported further along the BTC pipeline.[57] In January 2007, Kazakhstan's national company, KazMunayGaz, and the Western oil companies working in the Northern Caspian and the Tengiz projects (ENI, Total, ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch/Shell, ConocoPhillips, Inpex, and Chevron) signed a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding of the Main Principles of Cooperation on the Kazakhstani Caspian Transportation System Project intended to move the oil extracted in Kashagan and Tengiz across the Caspian Sea (the Eskene-Kuryk-Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan route),[58] the relevant figure being 23 million tons of Kazakhstani oil at the initial stage.[59]

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[55] See: S.F. Starr, "A 'Greater Central Asia Partnership' for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," *Silk Road Paper*, March 2005, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2005, available at [http://www.stimson.org/newcentury/pdf/Strategy.pdf]; S.F. Starr, "A Partnership for Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, July/August 2005, pp. 164-178.

[56] See: S. Cornell, A. Jonsson, N. Nilsson, P. Häggström, op. cit.

[57] At the first stage, it was expected to move up to 10 million tons of Kazakhstani oil every year.

[58] See: S. Smirnov, "Morskoy flot. Kaspiy ne zhdet," *KAZAKHSTAN*, No. 3, 2007, available at [http://www.investkz.com/journals/52/500.html].

[59] See: "The Eskene-Kuryk Oilpipeline," available at [http://www.kmg.kz/page.php?page_id=1128&lang=1].

It was at the same time that the West returned to the earlier abandoned idea of a trans-Caspian pipeline system (the Aktau-Baku oil pipeline and a gas pipeline to move gas from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan via the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline)[60] actively discussed in the 1990s. This made the planned Nabucco[61] and the TGI[62] (Turkey-Greece-Italy) gas pipelines, as well as the White Stream idea (a pipeline intended to move gas from Georgia to Rumania along the bottom of the Black Sea)[63] much more attractive.

In March 2007 in Washington, the U.S. Secretary of State and Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Cooperation in Energy Security in the Caspian which emphasized the sides' desire to start a high-level dialog on energy security in the Caspian under the joint chairmanship of the U.S. Department of State and the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan and their intention to cooperate in gas pipeline projects which would bring gas to Europe via Turkey.[64]

In April 2007, Rumania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Italy signed a treaty on the Constanța-Trieste oil pipeline with an annual carrying capacity of up to 100 million tons that will connect the Black Sea and Adriatic costs. In this way, Kazakhstani and Azeri oil will arrive in Europe without passing through the Russian Federation and Turkey.[65] In May and October, Western countries organized energy summits, in Krakow and Vilnius, respectively, to discuss energy supplies, which brought together the presidents of Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, and Poland, the minister of energy and mineral resources of Kazakhstan, and representatives of the EU, the United States, and other countries. The Vilnius summit adopted several documents, in particular, an Agreement among Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine on cooperation in the energy sphere; an Agreement among Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine on setting up a company to promote the Odessa-Brody-Gdansk[66] project, and an Agreement on the Lithuanian-Polish energy bridge.[67]

In May 2009, the EU summit in Prague approved the idea of the Southern Energy Corridor to ensure stable deliveries of Caspian and Middle Eastern energy resources to Europe.[68] In January 2011, during the visit of Head of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso to Azerbaijan, the sides signed a joint declaration on the Southern Energy Corridor. This means that Azerbaijan agrees to send its gas to Europe along this energy corridor.

The Kremlin, which cannot block these Western initiatives, tried to minimize their effect and bind Europe tighter to its own energy resources. In 2006, as soon as the Nabucco project had been approved, Gazprom, the Kremlin-controlled monopolist, announced that it had signed an agreement with Hungary on increasing the carrying capacity of the Blue Stream gas pipeline[69] and its extension

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[60] It was expected that the planned carrying capacity of the trans-Caspian pipeline would be within the 26-32 billion cu m limit (see: I. Tomberg, "Energy Policy and Energy Projects in Central Eurasia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (8), 2007, p. 47).

[61] Planned carrying capacity—26 to 32 billion cu m a year.

[62] Planned carrying capacity—12 billion cu m a year.

[63] See: B. Grgic, A. Petersen, "Escaping Gazprom's Embrace," *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, No. 14, Spring 2008, available at [http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2008/14/grgic&petersen.php].

[64] See: "Azerbaijan and the United States Signed a Memorandum on Energy Security," *Day Az*, 23 Match, 2007, available at [http://www.day.az/news/politics/74232.html].

[65] See: I. Tomberg, op. cit., p. 44.

[66] The reverse oil pipeline Odessa-Brody, which connects the Black Sea terminal and the Druzhba pipeline, was completed in 2001. It is expected that the branch from Brody to Plock in Poland will move Caspian oil to Gdansk and further on to European customers (see: I. Tomberg, op. cit., p. 43).

[67] See: "Energeticheskiy summit v Vilniuse," *Echo*, No. 188 (1669), 11 October, 2007, available at [http://www.echo-az.com/archive/2007_10/1669/politica03.shtml]; "Na summit v Vilniuse pribyl glava Evrosoiuza," *Echo*, No. 189 (1670), 12 October, 2007, available at [http://www.echo-az.com/archive/2007_10/1670/politica04.shtml].

[68] The Southern Corridor consists of several routes: Nabucco, Turkey-Greece-Italy, the White Stream, and the trans-Adriatic gas pipeline.

[69] The pipeline, commissioned in 2003 and which passes along the bottom of the Black Sea, is the main pipeline via which gas from Russia reaches Turkey; its annual carrying capacity is 16 billion cu m.

to Hungary from Turkey and the Balkan states. Gazprom's other maneuvers include its attempts to gain control over Hungary's oil and gas company, MOL,[70] and Serbia's state oil company, NIS[71]; its initiatives to build the South Stream gas main pipeline[72] and the Caspian Gas Pipeline[73]; its raising the carrying capacity of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium[74]; its building the Burgas-Alexandroupoli oil pipeline[75]; and its striving to purchase extra volumes of gas from the countries that can sell their gas to Europe through the Southern Energy Corridor (Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan).

Conclusion

The radically changed post-Cold War geopolitical situation in Central Eurasia inevitably invited the United States and its European allies to revise the region's security-related role. The mighty Soviet state disappeared along with the main threat to the Western world. Liberated from Soviet control, the region has gradually developed into a source of new threats.

The Soviet "nuclear legacy" and the uncontrolled zones in Central Eurasia, as well as the armed conflicts and domestic instability in the regional newly independent states have created the threat of WMD proliferation. The Iranian nuclear file and the possibility that non-state extremist organizations might gain access to WMD have made the West especially sensitive to the threat.

The West is equally aware of Central Eurasia as a link between the key Eurasian geopolitical actors (Russia, China, Turkey, and Iran) and an outlet to Afghanistan, which today is the main theater of struggle against international terrorism. The region is also an area of potentially diversified sources of hydrocarbons the West needs to lower the EU's dependence on Russia.

The main priorities of the Western tandem's political course in Central Eurasia throughout the entire post-Soviet period have been to strengthen the newly independent states through democratization and promoting a market economy, to encourage geopolitical pluralism at the regional level, and to develop a ramified system of oil and gas pipelines to ensure energy flows to Europe.

The absence of any obvious success either in Iran or in Afghanistan, the steady depletion of the world oil and gas resources, the equally steady increase in their consumption, the rivalry among the world powers for energy sources, China's successful advance toward a superpower status, and Russia's attempts to restore its great power status with the help of its energy policy are increasing, and will continue to increase, the role of Central Eurasia in ensuring the security of the United States and the European Union and, therefore, their consolidated involvement in the region.

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[70] See: B. Grgic, A. Petersen, op. cit.

[71] See: "Serbia gotova ustupit 'Gazpromu' natsionalnuiu neftianuiu kompaniiu za €1billion," *NEWSru.com*, 27 December, 2007, available at [http://palm.newsru.com/finance/27dec2007/srpska.html].

[72] The planned annual carrying capacity of the South Stream is 30 billion cu m. It is expected to pass along the bottom of the Black Sea to Bulgaria. There are two alternatives: it will either move to the southwest—across Greece and the Adriatic Sea to South Italy, or to the northwest—across Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, and Slovenia to Northern Italy. Gazprom is prepared to implement either of these projects or both of them (see: Th.N. Marketos, op. cit., p. 59).

[73] In May 2007, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan signed the Declaration on Building the Caspian Gas Pipeline with an annual capacity of 30 billion cu m. It will stretch along 360 km of the Turkmenian and 150 km of the Kazakh coast to join the Central Asia-Center main pipeline (see: I. Tomberg, op. cit., p. 50).

[74] It is planned to increase the initial annual carrying capacity of 28.2 million tons to 67 million tons.

[75] Russia, Greece, and Bulgaria signed the agreement in December 2007; the initial annual carrying capacity of 15 million tons could be increased to 50 million tons (see: "Podpisano soglashenie po nefteprovodu Burgas-Alexandrupolis," 18 January, 2008, available at [http://top.rbc.ru/economics/18/01/2008/134533.shtml]).