

U.S. STRATEGY IN CENTRAL ASIA: PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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Introduction

The events of the last decades have again demonstrated the close interconnection among all the parts of the international relations system. The main masterminds of world development are now finding that they too are being drawn into the processes going on in vitally important geopolitical zones of the world far beyond their own borders.

The Central Asia region is one of these zones for the following reasons:

- it is geostrategically located at the intersection among many of the existing,

potential, and planned transportation and pipeline routes;

- it has extremely rich natural and human resources;
- it is close in territorial-geographical, historical-cultural, and demographic terms to the hotbeds of instability in the Islamic world;
- most of the global challenges and threats (territorial, ethnonational, religious, environmental, and so on) are concentrated in its territory.

In this context, establishing political equilibrium in Central Asia that is favorable for all the regional actors, integrating the region into the global economic expanse, and maintaining sustainable democratic development meet the interests of stability and development of the entire system of international relations.

The strategic imperatives of American foreign policy regarding Central Asia, on which the U.S.'s claims to global leadership largely depend, have not changed during the entire post-bipolar period.

However, it is also true that stabilization in Central Asia is hindered by the fact that the

U.S. does not have a clear strategic conception (the changing international political situation periodically calls for its adjustment) or specific ways and methods to implement its plans, as well as by the fact that the geopolitical and geo-economic interests of other countries clash in the region.

This article attempts to analyze the evolution of the main trends and mechanisms of U.S. strategy in Central Asia (from 1991 until the present), in addition to the most important principles and factors predetermining the current situation in the region.

Fundamental Principles of the U.S.'s Central Asian Strategy

1991-1993. The collapse of the Soviet Union and formation of the newly independent states meant the beginning of a new era for the U.S. that symbolized the victory of Western ideals and democratic values.¹ It was presumed that the United States would claim global hegemony and present a model of Western market democratic values in the new world order. U.S. strategy in Central Asia was also conceptually based on the assumption that democratic states are not usually inclined to fight each other.²

It was important for the U.S. to acquire "strategically compatible partners" in Eurasia "who, prompted by American leadership, might help to shape a more cooperative trans-Eurasian security system;"³ post-Soviet Central Asia might become such a partner (due to its geostrategic location).

But there were few in the West (with the exception of a handful of Sovietologists) who had any true idea about Central Asia. When the newly independent states first formed, all that could be done was keep track of the events going on in them and more carefully analyze the region before going on to define the conceptual foundations of regional policy.

The withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Kazakhstan, which made a certain contribution to promoting stabilization in the region, was one of the noteworthy events of this period.

1994-1997. During this period, Washington gained a more or less adequate understanding of the region's special features, which were largely defined by its geopolitical environment. During these years, the foundations of U.S. long-term strategy in Central Asia were laid and have been preserved, with a few insignificant changes, to this day.

The discovery of rich deposits of energy resources in the Caspian region in the mid-1990s played an important role in forming U.S. strategy in Central Asia. This pushed the economic factor into the foreground, since it helped to lower the West's dependence on Middle Eastern oil in light of the Iranian-American confrontation and instability in the Middle East. In this context, one of the most im-

¹ See: F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, The Free Press, New York, 1992.

² See: J.L. Ray, *Democracy and International Conflict*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbus, 1995.

³ Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. 198.

portant objectives of this strategy was to prevent the CA countries from being drawn into the orbit of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI).

The potential joining of two oil-bearing zones (Central Asia and the Middle East) acquired both geopolitical (with respect to ensuring world leadership) and geo-economic significance for the U.S. since most of the potential Eurasian transportation and pipeline routes could be laid through Central Asia. In that event, the U.S. needed to have control over the energy resources and transportation corridors of the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

So the West put forward its plan to lay transportation and pipeline routes that presumed the participation of the Central Asian states. This would make it possible to include them in the future in the expanded Euro-Atlantic community. According to the American establishment, this task could primarily be carried out with successful political and economic modernization of the CA states, which would stimulate similar processes in the countries situated along the Great Silk Road.

The main ideas of U.S. policy toward Central Asia were set forth in Senator Sam Brownback's Silk Road Strategy in October 1997.

Russian and Iranian pipeline routes posed the main obstacles to implementing U.S. strategy in Central Asia, due to which the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline acquired increasing significance. According to Washington, Turkey could and should become the gateway through which Caspian oil reached the Western markets, as well as serve as a secular model of development for the new CA states.

However, the U.S.'s comprehensive promotion of the BTC project in the 1990s led to a real geo-economic war over access to the Caspian's energy resources, particularly since Afghanistan's internal instability made it impossible to launch a route through its territory.

Consequently, the Clinton administration's initial course toward strategic partnership with Russia was gradually replaced by a striving to limit its traditional influence in the CA countries. American-Chinese relations also underwent serious changes, since China, which was augmenting its economic presence in Central Asia, increasingly regarded the U.S. as its main geopolitical adversary.

On the other hand, after the war in Yugoslavia, the U.S.'s disagreements with the EU countries became more acute; moreover, America's European partners favored a "critical dialog" with Iran, which did not suit the White House at all: America feared the consequences of Iran's economic development stimulated by the inflow of European investments and advanced technology.⁴

It should be noted that within the framework of its Central Asian policy, the U.S. showed a special interest in Kazakhstan as the largest energy-producing CA state. Uzbekistan, as a state most vulnerable to the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, rendered the U.S. special support in the foreign policy sphere.

On the whole, the CA republics showed great interest in developing full-scale relations with a global nation that had significant economic and military-political potential and was also capable of rendering them regional security support. Moreover, the prospect of acquiring access to the world markets by implementing various transportation and energy projects was particularly important for the region's landlocked countries.

The period between the mid-1990s and the Andijan events in 2005 was characterized by increased contacts between the CA countries and the U.S. in the military, political-diplomatic, educational, scientific, and cultural-educational spheres, as well as in the development of energy projects.

1998-2000. The ascent to power in Iran of moderate reformer Mohammad Khatami and the Dialog among Civilizations he introduced in 2001 aggravated the previously designated geopolitical and geo-economic differences between the U.S. and its European partners. An increasingly larger

⁴ See: Ch. Lane, "Germany's New Ostpolitik: Changing Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 6, November/December 1995, pp. 77-89.

number of countries (including Russia, China, and the CA states) supported the idea of a critical dialog with the IRI.

U.S. policy, which was aimed at opposing projects in which Iran participated, aroused increasing discontent among the CA countries. For example, the American leadership's tardiness in issuing a license to the Mobile Company for participating in swaps with Iran had a very negative effect on the export of oil from Turkmenistan. The American side also froze deliveries carried out via the main gas pipeline through Iran that was laid with the assistance of a consortium headed by the British-Dutch Royal Dutch Shell Concern.

At the same time, certain changes occurred in Tashkent's perception of Iran with respect both to Tehran's cautious and flexible tactics toward Central Asia and to the hope of strengthening Khatami's pro-Western course and normalizing Iranian-American relations. Uzbekistan felt that the U.S. was not giving due attention to the region's security problems relating primarily to the situation in Afghanistan.

As for Tajikistan, the U.S. thought it enough to officially include it (in January 1994) on the list of countries belonging to the zone of Iranian dominance and possible spread of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.

From Strategic Partnership to Alienation in U.S.-CA Relations

2001-2005. After the September events of 2001, the U.S.'s penetration into Central Asia significantly accelerated. The democratic and socioeconomic problems in the country began being viewed from the perspective of America's own security. In this respect, completing modernization and Central Asia's entry into the world community, as well as Afghanistan's political restructuring, were associated in the U.S. with the formation of a new American-centered world order.⁵

Revision of the U.S.'s foreign policy doctrine in Central Asia in 2002 resulted in the adoption of the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act authorizing the development of democratic civil authorities and institutions not only in Afghanistan, but also in all the CA countries, as well as the revised U.S. National Security Strategy confirming the country's geopolitical interests in the Caspian and Central Asian regions and Washington's willingness to uphold them.

The Bush administration employed a wide range of measures to promote the U.S.'s active involvement in the CA region:

- relying on a new doctrine of preventive unilateral actions and placing the stakes on an ad hoc coalition of goodwill when resolving global security problems;
- imposing sanctions against geo-economically important Iran (Central Asia's regional neighbor) that has been among the countries listed as part of the axis of evil since 2002;
- putting political and economic pressure on the CA states in human rights and democracy issues (see Table 1);

⁵ It is reflected in corresponding geopolitical doctrines, such as the Greater Middle East, and later in its logical extension, the Greater Central Asia project, where the Central Asian region and the Middle East are joined into a single experimental geo-economic zone which has not found due support in the CA countries with their different political preferences and interests and different levels of development.

Table 1

**U.S. Assistance to the CA Republics
in Support of Democracy, Social and Market Reforms,
Security, and Development
in 2002-2005 (\$m)**

Country \ Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Kazakhstan	90	92	74.2	53.2
Kyrgyzstan	95	56.6	50.8	50.4
Turkmenistan	18.1	11.1	10.4	16.3
Uzbekistan	220	86.1	50.6	91.6
Tajikistan	160	49	50.7	59.9

Source: Documents of the U.S. State Department for the corresponding years [www.usinfo.state.gov].

- relying on Kazakhstan as an influential player in the Caspian and world oil-and-gas market; its joining the BTC energy project will be of decisive significance in promoting American strategy in Central Asia.

In the globalizing world, the steps taken and economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. have frequently been ineffective, which has significantly complicated its relations with many regional actors, including traditional allies (the EU and Turkey). The situation has also been aggravated by the U.S.'s military and technical involvement in the Big Game around the Caspian Sea, which has been gradually turning into one of the most militarized regions of the world.

It should be noted that in the context of the ongoing Iranian-American confrontation, the introduction of anti-Iranian sanctions, and the insufficient economic assistance, the implementation of energy transportation projects vitally important for Central Asia's development essentially ground to a halt. This applied in particular to the implementation of large-scale plans to ensure Uzbekistan's access to the sea routes (including access to the Black Sea and Pacific ports) drawn up under the European TACIS Program. As it was noted in Tashkent, "in order to carry out the difficult tasks facing the region's road builders, we need ongoing and comprehensive support... Due to insufficient financing... only around 40% of more than 9,400 km of general use roads in need of repair, according to the established standards of between-repair terms, are actually repaired."⁶ At the same time, "the indices of the inflow of foreign direct investments into Uzbekistan per capita are still the lowest among the countries with a transition economy."⁷

Central Asia gradually distanced itself from the United States. The main reasons for this were insufficient financial support and investments, U.S. pressure with respect to human rights and democracy, as well as the increase in geopolitical differences between Washington and its traditional allies. Moreover, the West's continued economic pressure on the region and the U.S.'s anti-Iranian strategy,

⁶ S. Li, "Dorogi, kotorye my obustravaem," *Narodnoe slovo*, 28 August, 2004.

⁷ A. Rasulev, R. Alimov, "Strukturnye preobrazovaniia i povyshenie konkurentosposobnosti ekonomiki Uzbekistana," *Obshchestvo i ekonomika* (Tashkent), No. 6, 2003, p. 202.

which excludes Tehran's participation in energy transportation and other projects, created reasons for Central Asia's further socioeconomic and political instability and its increased orientation toward China, Russia, and Iran. For example, almost 60% of the import of Uzbek cotton was reoriented toward the Iranian port of Bander Abbas⁸; Russia occupied first place among Uzbekistan's six leading trade partners for the first 9 months of 2005 with 19.2% of export (151.9% of the level of the first 9 months of 2004), while Iran was in third place with 6.8% (125.6% of the level of the first 9 months of 2004).⁹

The description of Central Asia's reorientation would not be complete without mentioning the closing of the American airbase in Khanabad (Uzbekistan) and cooperation of the Eurasian countries in the SCO and EurAsEC.

At that time, Washington tried to rethink Central Asian reality and expressed doubt that Central Asia was a priority interest for the U.S.

But Washington did not give up, recognizing that it had three targets of strategic interest in Central Asia—energy resources, security, and increased freedom through reforms.¹⁰ In order to improve the situation, the U.S.-led West, striving to gain a stronger foothold, supported Kazakhstan's application for chairmanship in the OSCE in 2009.

2006-2008. During these years, in addition to the U.S.'s unsuccessful strategy in Central Asia, George Bush's Middle East and Afghan policy also failed. The data of sociological polls carried out at that time showed the extent to which Americans perceived the threats coming from these regions as real: 79% of the respondents (compared with 72% in 2005) considered international terrorism to be an "extremely important" threat to national security, while 58% (45% in 2005) placed Islamic fundamentalism in this category (of which such countries as Iran, for example, are a source).¹¹

In striving to create an anti-Iranian coalition, the U.S. exerted perceptible efforts to overcome its differences with the EU and strengthen strategic partnership with Turkey.

The Bush Administration took certain steps to move closer to Russia, which was tussling with China for influence in Central Asia. Washington regarded Moscow more as a partner and not as a threat to the country's security interests. Moreover, constructive partnership with Russia might have put a stop to the creation of a widespread anti-American coalition and formed a counterbalance to China's growing might.

American-Russian cooperation focused primarily on joint participation of the two nations in the peaceful rehabilitation of Afghanistan and on the elimination of other potential hotbeds of instability in the CA region.

Meanwhile, the White House continued to declare that exporting oil and gas from Kazakhstan without passing through Russia and Iran was one of the priority tasks of U.S. foreign policy. Attempts were also made to reorient the region toward South Asia by creating a new energy grid. This idea was manifested in reorganization of the U.S. State Department, in which a Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs was created.

American diplomacy in Central Asia also became more active. In particular, in addition to Washington's support of Kazakhstan's possible chairmanship in the OSCE in 2009, Astana was also promised additional investments in the energy sector, including in the diversification of oil and gas

⁸ See: T. Tashimov, "Povorot na Vostok," *Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie* (Tashkent), No. 10 (73), 2005, pp. 45, 47, 49.

⁹ See: *Ekonomika Uzbekistana*, Informational and Analytical Review, January-September 2005, Center for Effective Economic Policy, Tashkent, No. 11, December 2006, p. 55.

¹⁰ See: "Chestnye vybory mogut sdelat Kazakhstan 'liderom' v Tsentral'noi Azii," available at [www.usinfo.state.gov/russian], 21 November, 2005.

¹¹ See: "Polls: Americans, Europeans Share Increased Fears of Terrorism, Islamic Fundamentalism," *Transatlantic Trends*, Washington, D.C., & Brussels, available at [www.transatlantictrends.org], 6 September, 2006.

export routes. The U.S.'s efforts in this vector resulted in the signing of an agreement between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in July 2006 on the transportation of hydrocarbons from Kazakhstan through the Caspian Sea and on via the BTC pipeline.

Moreover, Washington increasingly recognized that further waging of the antiterrorist war was impossible without Uzbekistan's active participation in it.

However, the region's high conflict potential and instability made the U.S.'s strategic partnership with the CA countries extremely unstable. And Central Asia began moving more toward the Eurasian vector in its development, which prevented enlargement of the U.S.'s military and political presence in the region.

New Trends—New Hopes and Prospects 2009—To the Present

When the Barack Obama Administration came to power in 2009, the nature of the U.S.'s participation in the region's affairs significantly changed. In particular, the new U.S. president gave up the tactic of unilateral action that Bush had upheld and tried to restore and reinforce alliance relations with the CA countries, as well as expand strategic partnership and establish a dialog with the Islamic world, including Iran. The Obama Administration preferred more cautious and restrained approaches in issues pertaining to democracy and human rights.

Due to the change in tactics in Central Asia and the need to look for a counterbalance to China's growing might, Washington announced its intention to strategically reset its relations with Russia.

In 2009, the Obama Administration launched a special mechanism aimed at expanding cooperation with the CA countries. During the consultations, the discussion focused on trade development, human rights, democratic reforms, defense cooperation, and regional security problems, including the situation in Afghanistan.

But Washington's actions did not pursue any precise strategy, which is explained by the ongoing rather strong conservative opposition within the country and the indefinite situation in the world. The White House's statements were mainly declarative.

In the meantime, the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan became increasingly aggravated, international tension over Iran's nuclear program grew, and the domestic situation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan became worse.

Within the framework of the activated multilateral discussions on regional security issues related primarily to Afghanistan,¹² Uzbekistan again put forward the initiative to create a 6+3 Contact Group with the participation of Russia, China, and Iran. In so doing, the initiative to transform the northern transit route of military shipments to Afghanistan into one of the routes of the present-day Silk Road is a measure that would be of benefit to all the regional actors. Implementation of this project would help to stabilize and promote the economic revival of the entire region, turning it in the future into a central Asian trade route hub.

After rethinking its strategy, the U.S. announced that Central Asia was playing a "vitally important role" in implementing Washington's long-term plans to restore the Great Silk Road. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (TAPI), actively promoted by Ashgabad, as well

¹² See: G. Yuldasheva, "Afganskiy faktor v tsentralnoaziatskoi politike: vzgliad iz Uzbekistana," available at [www.ia-centr-ru], November 2010.

as the Northern Distribution Network (mainly used to accommodate military deliveries to Afghanistan), in which Russia and Uzbekistan have been playing the main role, became the tools for implementing this plan.

These initiatives resulted in the formation of Barack Obama's National Military Strategy, which envisages the creation of new military bases in Afghanistan and its neighboring territories. The U.S. plans to play the role of guarantor of regional security and expand its military and political presence in Central Asia.

According to Washington, Uzbekistan is the key country in the region (from the viewpoint of ensuring regional security, military infrastructure, as well as due to its geostrategic location at the crossroads of Central Asia's transportation and energy arteries). Washington also continues to support oil-and-gas-rich Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, encourage parliamentary democracy in Kyrgyzstan,¹³ and draw Tajikistan into carrying out the regional plans.

According to several influential experts,¹⁴ the Obama Administration should follow seven critical guidelines in the CA region:

1. Put Central Asians themselves, not Russia, China, Iran, or other neighboring powers, at the center of America's approach to the region.
2. American policy cannot be naïve—strategic and economic competition does exist. The United States must respect neighboring powers' legitimate interests in Central Asia and work with Russia and China wherever feasible.
3. Rely on capabilities that the U.S. uniquely can offer to Central Asian governments, citizens, and businesses, such as proprietary industrial and scientific technologies, business skills, and military technologies.
4. Multiply U.S. strengths by working closely with international partners, including EU countries, Turkey, Japan, South Korea, and India.
5. Enhance cooperation with the private sector to further multiply U.S. strengths.
6. Remain mindful of the need for a regional strategy: integrating Central Asia into long-distance trade, encompassing continental routes across Asia, also has direct benefits for surrounding countries, including China, Russia, India, Europe, and the Middle East.
7. Pursue a multidimensional policy in Central Asia that includes all the integral components of security, trade, and human rights.

In essence, the listed guidelines are aimed at forming a new balance of forces and interests in Central Asia under U.S. leadership.

One of the U.S.'s indisputable advantages is its military-political, economic, and scientific-educational resources, the rational use of which is capable of strengthening stability and promoting Central Asia's development.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake listed the country's priorities in the Central Asian region as follows:

—support international efforts in Afghanistan;

¹³ See, for example: *Briefing of Assistant of State Secretary Blake for Journalists in Kyrgyzstan*, available at [America.gov], 14 March, 2011.

¹⁴ See: E. Feigenbaum, "Seven Critical Guidelines for U.S. Foreign Policy in Central Asia," Council on Foreign Relations, available at [www.businessinsider.com/seven-guidelines-for-us-central-asia-policy], 23 February, 2011.

- build a strategic partnership with India;
- develop more durable and stable relations with the Central Asian countries.¹⁵

Activation of U.S. policy in the Central Asian vector and possible fortification of the country's position in the region is causing concern in other states. In addition to the leftovers of Cold War thinking, there is still a certain amount of tension in Central Asia's geopolitics. This is shown by the difficulties in the U.S.'s relations with Russia and China. Moreover, the U.S. is very concerned about Turkey's foreign policy (Middle Eastern and Eurasian) preferences.

It cannot be denied that clear signs of rapprochement have been designated among the U.S., EU, and Russia. For example, the new strategic conception of the North Atlantic Alliance approved in Lisbon says that NATO is no longer a threat to Russia. According to some experts,¹⁶ NATO's new strategy should serve as a basis for forming a global anti-Chinese coalition.

The reality of such proposals is partially confirmed by the results of a survey carried out in February 2010 by the Rasmussen Reports Company: half of Americans think that China is a long-term threat to the U.S. A survey carried out by CNN gives an even higher result: 58% of U.S. residents think that China is a threat to the security of their country.¹⁷

It is becoming increasingly obvious that building a new world order makes no sense without Russia's active participation and presence in the region. It is no accident that Vice President Biden called for going beyond the Great Game and spheres of influence.¹⁸ The U.S. understands that without Russia it will essentially be impossible to resolve the Afghan problem, fight drug trafficking, and stabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan. In July 2009, an American-Russian Bilateral Presidential Commission was created under the supervision of Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev to determine spheres of mutually advantageous cooperation and strengthen international security.

However, on the other hand, several experts are concerned that fortification of the U.S.'s position in the Caspian Basin means linking the sanitary cordon—the Baltic states-Ukraine-Southern Caucasus—with Central Asia, thus isolating Russia along the entire southern perimeter of its borders.¹⁹ Moreover, it is assumed that the U.S. and NATO are trying to replace the SCO with a Northern Distribution Network, turning the latter into the driving force behind economic and military-political integration of the CA countries.

The U.S.'s foreign policy problems are intensified by domestic policy differences. Some experts note that the question of the country's future has still not been resolved; there is a struggle going on in the American establishment between those who want, like Barack Obama, to accommodate the U.S. to the reality of the 21st century and those who would like to remain in the 1990s and make the rest of the world follow suit.²⁰

On the whole, keeping in mind the difficulty and unpredictability of the situation, the U.S. today has become more realistic in its assessments. As head of the New York representative office of the

¹⁵ See: R. Rozoff, "Washington Intensifies Push into Central Asia," available at [www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL1101/S00127/washington-intensifies-push-into-central-asia.htm].

¹⁶ See: Sh. Sultanov, "Voina protiv Evrazii. Razmyshleniia o novoi strategicheskoi kontseptsii Severoatlanticheskogo aliansa," *Rossii-Islamskiy mir*, No. 49, 8 December, 2010.

¹⁷ See: *U.S. State Department. USA Forum on Facebook—Priorities of the Obama Administration in South and Central Asia*, available at [www.america.gov].

¹⁸ See: *Speech by Vice President Biden at Moscow State University on 15 March, 2001*, available at [www.america.gov/st/eur-russian/2011/March/20110315105450x0.7276226.html], WHITE HOUSE/Office of the Vice President, 10 March, 2011.

¹⁹ See: V. Iakubian, "Kak dolgo Moskva budet terpet antirossiiskuiu aktivnost Berdymukhammedova i Alieva," IA REGNUM, available at [www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1295472840], 19 January, 2011.

²⁰ V. Iasmann, "Ne toropites khoronit Ameriku," IA REGNUM, available at [www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1292143920], 12 December, 2010.

Institute of Democracy and Cooperation A. Migranian rightly notes, at the present stage, Washington is gradually giving up the role of world policeman and the practice of direct interference in the internal affairs of other countries.²¹ The U.S. is returning to the policy of so-called splendid isolation which envisages not domination and the country's direct presence in the regions that are vitally important to it, but maintenance of the balance of forces in them.

So a serious balance of forces will be created in Central Asia, since neither the U.S. nor Russia are interested in China's domination in this region.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

The main orientations of U.S. strategy in Central Asia have not significantly changed and are in general aimed at building an American-centered world order based on a balance of forces and interests among the leading world nations. Resolving most of the problems relating to the energy and political aspects of U.S. security, as well as forming a new system of international relations, depends on the results of the Afghan campaign, the key instruments of which are the TAPI projects and Northern Distribution Network to Afghanistan.

Instability in Central Asia is increasingly aggravated by the radicalization of the Middle East and expansion of the zone of activity of extremist forces; it will take immense efforts on the part of the world community to resolve this issue. But the region's numerous socioeconomic and political problems cannot be overcome using the former mechanisms of bloc thinking or isolated and weakly coordinated alliances of states that employ outmoded methods and means of conflict settlement.

In this respect, the provisions of the theory of the democratic peace regarding the role of democracy in reducing international conflicts look entirely justified. At least today, there is no other way to achieve peace and consent among nations.

It should be noted that the theory of public democracy put forward by the U.S., which envisages the creation of more favorable conditions for reaching a consensus among different social groups, societies, and countries, is entirely justified and meets the interests of most countries. Certain Western values may not be accepted, but in order to maintain peace and stability in any part of the world, universal standards of human rights definitely need to be observed.

It seems that the U.S., which is advancing generally positive objectives and tasks, has overestimated its possibilities and resources in pursuing preservation of its leadership in the world and in striving to limit the influence of certain regional forces in Central Asia. In particular, it has taken Washington decades to finally recognize Russia's positive role in ensuring security in Central Asia (particularly in the context of China's growing influence there).

It is entirely obvious that today American-Russian partnership is a necessity: only joint efforts will be able to prevent fundamentalist regimes from coming to power in the CA countries (this could be promoted by the unstable situation in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, neighboring Afghanistan, and Pakistan, as well as in the Middle Eastern states).

As time has shown, the U.S.'s main failure has been its ineffective anti-Iranian policy (in particular, the anti-Iranian sanctions), which has greatly limited the inflow of investments into the priority energy transportation projects for Central Asia.

As for U.S. assistance in the development of democracy and the observance of human rights in Central Asia, they are uneven and totally depend on the energy preferences of the super power. At the

²¹ See: A. Migranian, "SShA vybiraiut 'blestiaschchuiu izoliatsiiu,'" available at [svpressa.ru/society/article/40433/].

same time, the Western community has been oriented toward the same methods and accelerated rates regarding the universal democratization of the Central Asian countries as were used in the transformation of the Soviet Union, without keeping in mind the local specifics and historical experience of the countries.

Intensification and the overall dynamics of development of positive trends in American-Central Asian relations depend on a set of internal and external factors that include the following:

- a consensus on the fundamental issues of regional policy among the main political forces, both in the U.S. itself and at the international level;
 - coordinated and streamlined equal and mutually advantageous multilateral partnership in Central Asia;
 - closer American-Russian partnership in Central Asia in the interests of ensuring regional security and a possible counterbalance to the increase in China's domination in the region;
 - mobilization of political will and Central Asia's greater resolve to overcome the existing differences in the interests of large-scale integration and stability of the entire region.
-