

## Geo-political security and stability challenges to Central Asian region.

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Central Asia is a region stretching 'from the Caspian Sea to the Greater Hinggan and from the Siberian taiga to the Himalayas,' in the very heart of the great Eurasian continent, with no water arteries flowing therefrom into the oceans. Geo-politics are based on the dualism of opposite ontological and geo-political concepts - tellurocratia (the Land) and thalassocratia (the Sea). Central Asia embraces Middle Asia and Southern Kazakhstan, Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China), Afghan Turkestan (northward of Hindu Kush), Khorasan (north-eastern Iran) and northern Pakistan (Chitral) - countries with oil, gas, uranium, metals, water. By 2015 the Caspian Sea basin, this including Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, will be producing some 4 mln bbl of oil a day, which is more than Kuwait and Iraq are giving today.

It is geo-politically important that the Great Steppe, extending from Danube to Altai, constitutes 'the heart of the world' (Heartland), a theory by British geo-politician Halford J. Mackinder saying that: he who owns the Heartland owns the world. Eurasian experts Pyotr Savitsky and Georgy Vernadsky believed that Russia established itself exactly by gaining control over the Heartland and getting rich on the legacy of the ruler of the Great Steppe - Genghis Khan. In their article 'Geo-political Transformations in the Caucasian-Caspian Region' Igor Dobayev and Alexander Dugin say that geo-politicians term this area as Rimland, a region the Land (Russian Empire-USSR-Russia) wants to bring under continental influence, while the Sea (UK-US, NATO), on the contrary, to use as a base for expanding deep into Eurasia to gain military-political and economic dominance over the continent. The Great Caucasus has always been a field for frantic battles between the Anglo-Sax countries (Great Britain - since late XVIII, and the United States - since middle XX) and Russia, with the local nations having been 'hostages' to this clash for centuries.

After 'Sept 11 2001' the battle has moved to Central Asia, i.e. to the Heartland of 'the World Island.' The key 'players' have got even more frantic in their fight for control over Eurasia Continental, 'the axis of the world politics.'

Each geo-political epoch has its peculiar balance of forces in the world arena, its unique configuration of borders and influence zones - all that comprises the global geo-political stage for the key historical players to act on. The consistency of the 'anaconda' strategy (to force Russia off the sea and purlieus) and Brzezinski's 'linkage' idea (USSR can be defeated only after all Eurasia's littoral areas are 'linked' together) have broken the balance of inter-restrictive forces in the post-war world system. The Soviet Union has collapsed. The cascade of 'color' revolutions in the post-Soviet area has heavily slashed the scope of Russia's strategic interests in Central Asia.

Protracted involvement in the collective anti-terror operation, so important for legalizing Chechnya's pacification, is causing yet bigger and bigger damage to Russia's image and geo-policy and is preventing the country from keeping up the traditional line of inter-ethnic and inter-religious cooperation it has been successfully

following since XV. Russia is getting yet deeper and deeper into a large-scale conflict with the Islamic world, into an exhaustive and losing 'war of civilizations.' The only way for the country to try to get back its lost sway in Central Asia is, probably, to turn about its political paradigms.

Military geo-politician Yevgeny Morozov says: 'The first to come in mind is the deepening of relations with Iran and all the pro-Iranian groups of conservative Khomeini-type Islamic revolutionaries. It seems we need stronger support from the modernist forces professing Islamic Socialism, including the Iraqi and Syrian regimes and the Islamic groups based on their theory and practice. And finally, we need to politically reconstruct Central Asia. ...Russia should not do this alone, but in maximal cooperation with China, Iran and India, as the strategic antipode of Pakistan. This region can be integrated as a Central Asian Confederation (pro forma or per se), patronized by an association of Russia, China, Iran and, possibly, India, who can guarantee the sovereignty and the progressive development of the Central Asian states. Economically, it would be expedient to form a common Central Asian market involving associate territories like Xinjiang, Khorasan and Afghan Turkestan.' Russia should quickly resolve the Southern Siberian problem - by fostering Kazakhstan's federalization and creating a Southern Siberian Autonomy therein, or 'even by directly annexing this steppe region,' says Morozov. Contributive to this will be the growing American-Chinese confrontation over Taiwan and other issues and the resistance of the Central Asian elites to change the status and the structure of their regimes and to move towards democratic reforms.

But Russian geo-strategists have other concerns. They want to get the following things in the region: to steadily control the southern regions of Siberia and Ural; to make most of the resources and positions of the Central Asian countries in exchange for the collective protection of their state sovereignties (often = ruling clan dictatorships), material and technological assistance; to keep the counter-revolutionary status quo in the region; to mend-stabilize stagnating regimes in the region by stopping political fluctuations in the local countries, by, desirably, just 'reshuffling' and 'redecorating' the state machinery rather than dismantling its obsolete units; to let modernize the regimes only those states and business elites, who actually want to help Central Asia to live without shocks rather than to destabilize and destroy the region just to be able to export democratic novelties. I suppose that is the maximum of Russia's strategy in the region.

Tactically, Russia seems to be after the following mid-term prospects:

- to control the transit of Central Asian energy resources, and not to let them grow into an alternative to its own raw materials, to seek control over the energy flow and agency in selling it to the world;
- to preserve its sufficient presence in the region so as not to allow the radical Islamism to overflow into Russia;
- to set barriers to the US' efforts to 'export democracy';
- to pool efforts with Beijing on some strategies to jointly confront the US interests but, at the same time, not to allow China to gain dominance in the region. Moscow-Beijing relations will develop between two poles: cooperation and conflict. Analyst Paul Goble says that this will happen irrespective of what the US will do - ally with

China against Russia or ally with Russia against increasingly influential China. If the US pals up with Russia against China, the Chinese may sell out US state securities to cause a disastrous fall in USD, with all the ensuing consequences. This process seems to be already underway. Not knowing what to do - to be friend or enemy - (the) countries often use the vague term of 'strategic partnership.'

The internal political crises in the post-Soviet area taken differently by Russia and the US. As the system-forming basis of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Russia is using its 'political weight so as not to let the process beyond the constitutional framework and the national legislative limits.' Quite reasonably, NATO is not hurrying to get into one harness with the CSTO - for it has different goals in the region. Two big players are engaged in a geo-strategic fight under the slogan of 'a fight with Islamic extremism and drug trafficking.' After 2003 the West has begun actively playing on the ground of Russia's interests. This is due to the following factors:

- quite unhampered, victorious march of NATO to the East;
- the George Bush United States is showing growing disdain for Russia's generally 'imperial' interests and at times gets openly anti-Russian;
- having lost some of its role with end of the Afghani war, Russia is now trying to rival with the US in shaping the ethnic-political Pushto-Tajik relations in the newly built Afghanistan. Iran, who is especially dangerous for its Shi'a-type religious fanaticism, is getting a growing obstacle between Russia and the US.

Isn't this - altogether - why the pressure on Russia is growing? They keep showing it its 'due' humble place of a loser in the 'cold war,' reprimanding it even for a try to restore necessary power and calling its wish to be strong and independent 'a set-back to the Soviet-time imperialism.' Driven into a corner, Russia has nothing left but, in order to organize its own safe and intact living space, to associate the territories bordering on the CIS with the zone of its direct geo-political interests. At the same time, avoiding sharp corners with the US and no longer able to avoid the impact of the 'flower' developments in the post-Soviet world, Russia has to share its CIS 'underbelly' with its rivals, to grudgingly say 'yes' to the US military bases deploying in Central Asia and, to save its face, to allege that this is done 'under the anti-terror coalition inter-state agreements.'

The CIS is in its last days. Even CSTO Secretary General Nikolay Bordyuzha admits this: 'Most of the CIS 'military' initiatives are either not signed or not ratified by all... Even more, some CIS countries have announced that they want to join NATO and are already adopting its structures, standards and even armaments. Given this, one can hardly speak about serious cooperation or integration.' But still, with all their antagonism of principle, aren't Russia and the US common somewhere deep in their strategies? They are. THE AMERICANS HAVE STARTED THE SAME INTEGRATION IN THE CIS - BUT IT IS CALLED DEMOCRATIZATION Fearing that the CIS may break up into disintegrated projects, with it just participating therein, Russia is reinforcing the 'truncated' Commonwealth with its Russian-Chinese resource. Based on pragmatic mutually beneficial cooperation, the revived Russian-Chinese CIS will, expectedly, stop the inevitable 'fragmentation' of the post-Soviet space.

The potential global interests of the United States in Central Asia:

- the alliance seeks to become a 'safeguard' for the region by strengthening its military presence as a tool to pressure China, Iran and, in the future, India and as a base for possible military campaign against Iran;

- to gain control over the production and transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea basin;

- to control strategic uranium fields;

- to create conditions for possible raw material blockade of China;

The strategic interests of China in the Central Asian region:

- to get access to the exploitation of the Central Asian oil and gas fields;

- to change the direction of the oil and gas export from the west to the east;

- to ensure its military presence in the region and to take part in the building of new roads;

- with Russia's support, through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China is seeking to close the base in Kyrgyzstan - the United States' 'eyes and ears' in the region - a good reconnaissance facility, capable of monitoring China, Kazakhstan and Iran.

But there is a trinity of factors that will help to the US to preserve its base in Manas:

- there is no consensus or a firm common stance on the issue between Russia, China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan;

- Bishkek's tactical rather than strategic support of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization declaration on the withdrawal of foreign troops from Central Asia is, probably, just an attempt to gain better financial terms for its hosting the base in Manas;

- Kyrgyzstan has no clear foreign policy: like Kazakhstan and Armenia, it follows a 'multi-polar and multi-vector' foreign policy. A strong foothold on the 'Kyrgyz base' promises big geo-political dividends. 'In terms of regional security, as a country lying at the very source of the big Central Asian rivers, Kyrgyzstan may have a critical influence on agriculture and electricity production in the countries lying down the course of the rivers - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.'

Any negative impact by Kyrgyzstan on the water power system may shatter regional stability and jeopardize the US economic and political interests, says a document by USAID, an agency 'promoting democracy and human rights, introducing and institutionalizing market economy, contributing to the resolution of social and humanitarian problems in the former Communist states of Europe and Eurasia.' USAID's legislative basis is The Freedom Support Act. Public Law 102-511.

But still, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev said recently that he is ready to give his country's energy system to a Russian company. Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov acts in the same way: despite multi-million 'gifts' and diplomatic pressure from Japan, the EU and the US, he prefers remaining friend with China and ally with Russia.

Central Asia needs a guaranteed shield from the terrorism conspiring outside.

In terms of global challenges, Iraq may well become second Afghanistan - a training ground for international terrorists. The presence of the coalition troops in Iraq is ineffective. Bringing independence to Iraq could have been a sensible policy rather than 'freedom bayonets': Iraq's independence would have been ensured by Shi'as, who are not going to join Iran, and by Kurds, who fear Turkey; then, seeing they might face a large-scale Shi'a-Kurdish opposition and no longer able to say they are doing this to fight the foreign occupants, the Iraqi Sunnis would have met half-way for the sake of national accord. But it seems to be already late to manipulate the interests of 'the aborigines': Iraq is facing a real civil war.

The country has practically cracked up into three ethnic-religious units: Kurdish autonomy, Shi'a region and Sunni mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates). The Islamic fundamentalists are getting stronger - for some 15 years more Islam will be a strong political-religious force in the world. Instability will run in a belt throughout the Muslim world - from Marocco to Xinjiang, from Somalia to the Philippines - to also engirdle Central Asia - Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The local Muslims want to proclaim a Muslim state in the Fergana valley. In Uzbekistan Russia has backed up the secular regime of Islam Karimov, who is fighting Wahhabis, just like Vladimir Putin does in Chechnya, in the Caucasus. The outburst of anti-Russian moods in Central Asia is due obviously to Russia's enemies and some religious trends, who have made National Chauvinism a part of daily life in the region.

Russia is trying to maneuver between Islam and the West. During his Dec blitz visit to Grozny, just before a trip to Malaysia for an ASEAN summit, the Russian president said that 'Russia has always been the most loyal, reliable and consistent advocate of the interests of the Islamic world.' That was a signal to the West that Moscow is not going to desert its allies - Iran, Syria and, especially, Uzbekistan. That was also a message to the Muslim community of Russia and, especially, the Muslims of Central Asia and Northern Caucasus. Zavtra daily makes an interesting conclusion of it:

'The painful 'flick on the nose' Putin got at the ASEAN summit in Malaysia, where Russia was - quite unexpectedly - denied membership because of torpedoing protest by Australia, is said by experts to be due to the change in China's foreign political strategy - for the growing influence of the 'hua qiao' in Australia is obviously making that country 'a geo-political glove' on 'Beijing's hand.' This is proved by not only the mass 'anti-global' disorders in Hong Kong, but also the attempted 'hostile take-over' of the London Stock Exchange by the Australian Macquarie bank, who offered \$2.7 bln for the floor. This is a signal that China is getting increasingly aggressive in the international financial affairs...' A new global power, a new model of civilization incarnate, China has concerns worldwide. And with the Western and Eastern elites facing crisis, it's global influence will get increasingly implicit.

Now Russia's position in the region is somewhat stronger, as compared with how deplorable it was in late 1990s. Then, the ruling elite was, as they say, 'standing on the throat of its own song': in exchange for US investments, it was offered to open wide its 'closed society' (just like Askar Akayev was once offered to dance to the roll of Russian spoons) and, under the banner of human rights protection, to build faceless 'bright future' - an offer that would discredit

traditional archaic values, destabilize government regimes and end in a change of ruling clans.

The oversea partnership was not a guarantee of 'eternal friendship' with the local rulers. Made a dogma, this ideology has remarkably reduced the US' authority in the region and has 'inversely proportionally' raised Russia's sway in the local decision-making. They have even begun to say that Russia may come back to its former positions in the Soviet-time volume. The seemingly 'accidental' success in Uzbekistan had turned out into a real triumph for Russia when, in response to the US' negative reaction to the events in Andijan, the Uzbek president demanded that the US withdraw its Karshi Khanabad military base. Solzhenitsyn's democracy is, certainly, not to the point here. But indeed, for example, Europe is beginning to see and agree that the Russian prophet-writer has a point when saying that 'democracy cannot be put on like a cap'; and that the whole project 'to put democracy everywhere in the world is absurd' as such (with Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq being the best examples). Unconsolidated is not only the post-Soviet area, but also Europe itself, who has now become like the Testament - 'old' and 'new.'

But this is just the beginning of embarrassing trials for Russia's geo-political prospects in Central Asia. Moscow is now faced with the dual loyalty of the post-Soviet leaders. It is embarrassed with dual bases, Kazakh gas for Georgia, possible Kazakh oil for Europe via BTC. 'Moscow fears that not only there can be rivals on the European market, but also that Europe's oil refineries may get reequipped for the Kazakh oil and prove no longer technically able to process the Russian oil, which is different in quality from the Caspian one.' The US strategists are wide awake too - they are planning to form a new inter-state regional organization in Central Asia - a US-protected alternative to Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Economic Community.

In 2006 the White House will add \$1.3 bln to its \$4.6 bln democracy support spending in foreign countries. In Kyrgyzstan alone it has set up a whole chain of 'defensive' systems of approaching democracy: some 30 different international organizations have been enrolled to carry out 200 projects in the country. The best known are USAID, National Democratic Institute, OSCE Center in Bishkek, Soros-Kyrgyztsan Foundation, Freedom House, Counterpart Consortium, US Peace Corps, UNDP, CSTO, International Republican Institute and IFES.

Quite probably, each given a particular role, they act jointly to attain the general goal of society democratization. Unseen for a while, humanitarian initiative funds are now back on stage after the SCO communique that calls on the US to say when exactly it will take its military bases from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The US military presence in the region restricts strategic space for Russia and China.

The US is worried with this Russian-Chinese campaign - a joint rebuff to its plans. General Richard Myers says that 'two very big countries have tried to scare smaller ones' - thereby contrasting Russia and China with the other SCO members - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. He says that the US is not going to let Central Asia out of the sphere of its interests. But China is also resistant: it has decided to provide the region with \$900 mln in long-term loans. This means that besides cooperating on security, the SCO countries have got into a tighter economical integration. No compulsion for excessive integration makes SCO definitely flexible (the example of NATO and the EU has shown that the very close integration of

heterogeneous countries may end in their obvious antagonisms)

SCO is a powerful structure. It is not only Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Ready to change their observer status for full membership are India, Iran, Pakistan and Mongolia. In GDP China has only the US ahead. India rivals with the EU economies. And now with Brazil and Indonesia already downstage, this all may turn around the West and East, the North and the South, the developed and the developing. This is a factor one cannot but respect. The West may well choke in the 'Third Wave' of democratization - for the authoritarian countries who chose democracy in 1990s may now 'fall back to authoritarianism' again. That is, probably, why the US is steering its foreign policy from Europe to more troublesome Asia. Most probably, 'America's power will grow on Asia.' Relevantly and inevitably transformed must be the whole system of Trans-Atlantic relations, the role of NATO and the nature of the US' relations with the EU, Russia and China.

Russia's positions in the region are weaker than China's. Russia is getting even more instable in the region as its elites continue arguing about where the country should move in its foreign policy. The 'Petersburg Liberals' argue for strategic partnership with the West, with the security and military officers counter-arguing for the Moscow-Delhi-Beijing triangle, proposed by Russian Ex Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov during the NATO operation in Yugoslavia.

Europe is stealing up to Central Asia. The EU has appointed a Special Representative for Central Asia to foster legal statehood in the region. Also there - are groups and individuals from separate countries. So, the interests of all the 'players' should be considered.

The increasingly conflicting ambitions of the key world players can make the world picture unrecognizably different by 2030. In his 'New Geo-Political Model of the World' Vladimir Zhirinovskiy prophesies:

- Russia will again subdue Central Asia morally and politically;
- Afghanistan will fall apart into ethnic pieces: the Tajik north will go to Tajikistan, the Uzbek and Turkmen east to Turkmenistan and Afghanistan respectively. One part will go to Iran, with the Hazaras possibly moving there from the center. The Pushtos of the south will unite with the Pushtos of Pakistan into an independent Pushtunistan. Northern Pakistan with disputed Jammu and Kashmir will go to India. The many-year Pakistani-Indian war will end in Pakistan losing its independence. Russia will get an excellent chance to have a border with India in the region of Afghanistan and then bigger Tajikistan and, having a broad gauge from Moscow to Dushanbe, to prolong it till Delhi. And a real avalanche of cargo - worth some \$1 bln - will rush from India to Dushanbe, Central Asia, Moscow and further to Europe.

Zhirinovskiy forecasts the following future for Russia's southern borders:

- Northern Azerbaijan may be placed under Iran's jurisdiction. Armenian will move south-east to the Caspian Sea to form a buffer between Russia and Muslim Iran. They may even form a Great Armenia by reunifying Armenia with its south-western territories in Turkey and giving it a westward access to the coast of the Black Sea. Practically reinstated within its ancient borders, Armenia will have sea gates and good, kind neighbors - Kurds and Persians - in Southern Turkey and Russia in the region of the Caucasian Mountains from the Caspian Sea;

- Georgia will, possibly, preserve its present territory but will have to host Adygs, Kabardins, Balkars, Cherkeses, Karachays, Ingushes migrating from Abkhazia;

- North Ossetia will, probably, move to South Ossetia to form a new independent Republic of Alania with capital in Tskhinvali;

- Chechens and Ingushes will, most probably, move to Pankisi Gorge and nearby villages in Northern Georgia to mark the end of their conflict with Russia.

- The residents of Dagestan will move southward to the Caspian coast into the sphere of Iran's influence. And so, in the Caucasus Russia will have mono-ethnic Stavropol, Rostov and Krasnodar provinces, with mostly Russian population and constant ethnic deployment all over the Northern Caucasus and all along the Caucasian Range. There will be no other ethnic groups and so no more conflicts there.

Central Asia, a region full of conflicts between ethnic groups, religions, administrative constructions, clans and groups, elites and informal movements is a 'boiler' that can blow up at any moment. The crowd here is easily mobilized for protest under any slogan and for action to change the regime. If there is wish, there is no difficulty in kindling old problems to bring the social activity of those displeased and those hired to the 'degree' of explosion. Political and psychological saboteurs can easily exert cognitive pressure on the 'spinal' consciousness of the boiling mob, prompting it that 'one can no longer bear this' and that only radical measures can change the situation. It is very dangerous to whip up ethnic-religious, social and administrative interests in the region. The ensuing processes may fail to end just at the stage of 'relative chaos' (like fishing carefully in troubled waters), but may break out of the clan property re-division framework into an endless bloody separatism - something mortal for all. Only a fair and stable balance between the interests of the US, Russia and China in Central Asia can guarantee security in the region.

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