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Central Asian Security Dynamics in the Global Context

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the emerging Central Asian republics (CARs), namely, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan draw the attention of major regional and global powers. China, Russia and the United States of America have become particularly active to promote bilateral relations in various spheres with these regional republics. Because of its geostrategic and economic importance Central

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Asia might turn to the regional arena where the conflicting interests of major powers could destabilise the existing regional order. So far the presence of major powers in this region has had a positive effect, but in the future the unchecked growth in power and influence of one, might lead to geopolitical imbalance and cause a regional security dilemma, where a fixed power balance between Russia, China, and the United States would ensure long-term stability and security in the region.

China

China's internal security and territorial integrity closely interlinked with political stability in Central Asian region. From the very outset of Chinese involvement in this region, the Beijing leadership set clear political and economic objectives such as co-operating in military and security matters, developing trade relations with focus on oil, gas, and grain export-import operations. By development of political and economic bilateral relations with the CARs Beijing aims for better co-ordination in eradication of terrorism, extremism and separatism, as well as, to boost interregional economic and political contacts.

The emergence of new independent republics in Central Asia has created a favourable environment for economic development of China's western provinces. A Chinese political scholar emphasising importance of this region notes, „China cannot exist without Central Asia, where region – without China“.¹ Only from 2001 to 2002 the Chinese Sichuan province managed to increase its trade with the CARs 13 times, where the central government under the President Hu Jintao already expressed its readiness to boost trade relations with Central Asia 50 fold over the – coming decade.²

For China fighting terrorism and religious extremism is of a high priority. In January 2002 both China and Russia unveiled their joint strategy to transform the *Shanghai Co-operation Organisation* (SCO, established in 1996 as a forum for border delimitation between China, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), into a regional security structure capable of conducting 'joint anti-terrorist operations'.³ All CARs (except Turkmenistan) are members of the SCO, in which Russia and China are the leading member-states. The SCO is an appropriate security framework with clear political and military objectives. As Sean L. Yom points out, the newly created security

mechanism was to „combat the ‘three evil forces’ of terrorism, extremism, and separatism, the last being a thinly disguised reference to violent Islamic radicalism“.⁴ Thus China became the regional guarantor of security and institutionalised its relationship with regional republics of Central Asia through the SCO structures.

Some experts argue that in the global context the SCO poses a direct challenge to the US unilateral actions in Central Asia. The tragic events of 11 September in New York and the subsequent US war on terrorism in Afghanistan significantly strengthened the American foothold in this region. According to Chjan Tegan the establishment of US military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan strengthens the United States’ military strategic position against China, deters Russia in north, and pays even more dividends from region’s rich energy resources.⁵ Thus, several Chinese scholars express their concerns over the US presence in Central Asia and view it as a direct threat to China’s national security interests.

Recently, two presidents V. Putin and Hu Jintao expressed their readiness to challenge president Bush’s conservative policy with his unilateral war on terrorism.⁶ The SCO framework is one of such devices where Russia and China could unite their efforts in fighting terrorism and extremism. On Moscow SCO summit six participating heads of state declared, „The war against terrorism should be pursued on the basis of international law. You cannot identify it with a war against any religion, country or nationality“.⁷ By strengthening the SCO in near future China will be able to strengthen political and military ties with the five member-states and even acquire a strategic initiative in shaping Central Asian security environment.

Russia

In the past ten years Russia has been going through the deep geopolitical transformation. Today Russia is not able to clearly define her long-term interests and objectives in Central Asia. The absence of a leading national idea, weak economy and lack of a well-established strategy leaves Russia in a great disadvantage vis-à-vis other major powers present in Central Asia. The US-led war on terrorism in Afghanistan and the establishment of American military bases in a number of regional republics is a natural outcome and a vivid example of a diminished role of Russia in the regional affairs.

Challenged by Americans Russia is trying to regain her political and military power and incorporate CARs into the Russian sphere of influence. One of the main Russian-led military institutions the *Collective Security Treaty Organisation* (CSTO, The *CIS Collective Security Treaty* was signed by the heads of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on 15 May 1992) is a defensive pact and a guarantor of Russian interests in the region. In Central Asia only Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are members of this security block, which changed its status to Organisation in April 2003.⁸ Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan do not participate in the activities of this Organisation.

Using the CSTO security framework Russia actively guards her national interests in the region. Officially the Organisation aims to fight terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime. Within the CSTO framework Russian and Kyrgyz officials reached an agreement on establishing a Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan in September 2003.⁹ At the Kyrgyz „Kant“ airport Russia has already stationed her air-force squadron, which includes around 1000 Russian rapid reaction forces, Su-27 air-superiority fighters, Su-25 attack fighters, Mi-8 helicopters. A number of international military experts call this move as „asymmetric response to America“.¹⁰ Russia is trying to counter the growing US influence in the region.

Another Russian stronghold in Central Asia is the *201st Motorised Rifle Division* (MRD) that has been stationed in Tajikistan since 1945 and took part in Soviet operations in Afghanistan in the 1980s. According to some estimates Russia maintains around 11,500 men in Tajikistan.¹¹ The Tajik president I. Rakhmonov on many occasions repeatedly stressed the invaluable role of Russian military forces in bringing peace and stability to this war-torn republic. However, recently Tajik officials requested Russia to meet the full cost of maintaining her forces in this country rather than using 50/50 format, which equally divided the financial burden between the two sides.¹² Moreover, the Tajik president wishes exclusive commandment rights by which in urgent cases he would become the sole commander-in-chief of Russian forces stationed on the Tajik soil.¹³ Undoubtedly, such sharp change in Tajik policy is due to the growing US influence in regional security affairs.

Russia paid a high price for letting the US forces to station in Central Asia. On one hand, the rising threat of international terrorism and the subsequent US-led war against terrorism in Afghanistan helped Moscow to curb threat coming from South. On the other hand, Russia lost the re-

gion and any debate about Central Asian security would involve the United States as well as China. Unilaterally Russia is unable to counter the US power, but joint Sino-Russian alliance within the SCO security framework may become a powerful response to the US positions in the region. As Sean Yom argues „Both of these powers [Russia and China] envisaged the organisation [SCO] as an instrument to carve a safe rear from foreign encroachment in their geopolitical backyard, a way to exert dual hegemony over Central Asia“.¹⁴

The conservative military circles within Russian leadership perceive the US strong foothold in Central Asia negatively. There were many protests against Putin's co-operative and reconciliatory strategy with liberal West, especially with the United States. For example, according to defence analyst Pavel Felgenhauer, „For many in Russian military and political elite, this is seen as a sort part of the zero-sum games of - if American influences rises in a region that was part of the Soviet Union and Russia still considers [it] part of its backyard, [then] what's good for America is bad for Russia“.¹⁵ There is a psychological factor – historical memory acting as a precursor in defining foreign policy objectives within the dominant political and military circles in Kremlin. Obsolete stereotypes and rigid geopolitical thinking confine a fraction of the Russian ruling elite, which leads to antagonistic and even confrontational stance against the United States.

USA

After becoming independent, the CARs have started to develop and strengthen bilateral relations with the United States of America. The United States has also defined its political and economic interests in Central Asia and set clear long-term objectives vis-à-vis the CARs. The dramatic events of 11 September and the subsequent campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan triggered the US-CARs co-operation, especially in security affairs, and significantly strengthened the US role in regional affairs.

The overall success of the US-led Enduring Freedom military operation against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan reduced the danger of terrorism, pacified the country and changed the geostrategic balance in the region. The CARs have offered an invaluable support to the coalition forces, and in the case of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan the international airports and military bases were being offered for search and rescue operations in Afghanistan.¹⁶

Some analysts tend to think that the US emphasis on military presence in Central Asia proves that the Americans are implementing a 'grand design' in projecting their might throughout the Eurasian landmass. Certainly, the American presence in the heart of Eurasia looks like that White House policy-makers are following Z. Brzezinski's recommendation, „For America, the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia... Now a non-Eurasian power is pre-eminent in Eurasia – and America's global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained“.¹⁷ Thus the United States managed to get into the heart of Eurasia – Central Asia as a result of antiterrorist campaign in Afghanistan and establish strong military presence in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

However, after crushing terrorists in Afghanistan, Americans did not promptly leave the region but committed themselves into regional socio-political affairs. Americans fostered co-operation and partnership relations with regional republics, where with Uzbekistan they have established strategic partnership.¹⁸ The United States elaborated the following goals as a way to strengthen the sovereignty of Central Asia republics:

- Strengthen independence and develop democratic institutions;
- Support economic reforms to improve welfare of local people;
- Foster co-operation of regional states and help them to integrate into the international community;
- Assist in formulating security policy in fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.¹⁹

The US administration sees that political stability in Central Asia may result only with successful economic reforms. Only economic security of the local population may prevent the radical extremist forces from destabilising region. Region's rich oil and natural gas reserves have attracted American oil and gas companies into this region. As Stephen Blank notes, „Strategic calculations of energy prices and accessibility through pipelines, the unique American sensitivity to oil and gas prices, and traditional security issues in Europe, the CIS and the Middle East drive US policy [in CA]“.²⁰ A number of American companies such as Exxon-Mobile, General Motors and Texaco have already started to implement energy projects across the region.

One of the major political issues on American agenda is to promote democracy in Central Asia. Americans are committed to establish democratic institutions, develop civil society, support non-governmental organi-

sations, and assist media. On 27 June 2002 Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary of State, speaking on Senate hearings on the US co-operation with the CARs noted, „There is a firm consensus among all U.S. decision-makers that broadening of a co-operation will only be possible if these same governments undergo political reforms that will allow the emergence of democratic institutions, without which there can be no lasting stability in the region“.²¹ Thus, the United States firmly asserts that political reforms are of principal importance and should not be disregarded.

American unexpected ‘intrusion’ into Central Asia may cause a lot of tensions with Russia and China. The historical status quo in this region has already been challenged by the US growing role. Today, most experts are talking about the emergence of a ‘new geopolitical situation’ in Central Asia, where Russia, China and the United States will confront each other.

The United States as the only global superpower has secured its ‘strategic hand’ in Central Asia. As journalist Amin, referring to the importance of Central Asia, emphasises that Afghanistan is, „A new base to launch deep strategic forays in the heart of Russia and China isolating and cutting off both from the vast natural oil and gas reserves of Central Asia and severing the Russian line of communication with oil and gas rich Siberia.“²² The author reveals the underlying causes of US actions in Afghanistan.

The immediate cause of US incursion into Central Asia became the dramatic 11 September events and the subsequent campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan. Aftermath, a number of political experts have started to talk about the revival of *Great Game* (In the XIX. century British Captain Arthur Connolly coined the *Great Game* phrase to illustrate the rising competition between the Victorian England and Tsarist Russia for supremacy in Central Asia in the XIX. century) in this region. Z. Brzezinski stressing the pivotal importance of Central Asia for the United States, notes that „The most immediate task is to make certain that no state or combination of states gains the capacity to expel the United States from Eurasia or even to diminish significantly its decisive arbitration role“.²³ In the light of a recent geopolitical ‘shuffling’ in Central Asia, a number of international political experts have been questioning whether the United States is confident about the long-term effects of its presence in this part of the world.

The USA-Russia-China triangle in Central Asia is a reality for foreseeable future. The Sino-Russian competition against the United States is likely

to escalate rather than to strengthen regional security. If these three major powers could not co-operate with each other in regional affairs, it is likely that the CARs would be torn apart by the conflicting interests of the major powers. Central Asia should become the place of co-operation rather than confrontation, where accommodating and constructive approach will only benefit all states-participants and lead to a greater stability in Central Asia.

Notes:

- ¹ Sun Djuanji. "Chjungya ugo duyvai guansi" In Alimov, M. *Tsentrāl'naya Aziia: Geoekonomika, Geopolitika, Bezopasnost*, (Tashkent: Sharq, 2002).
- ² "Xinjiang bridges China", *Central Asia' People's Daily*, 2 October, 2003
- ³ Executive Summary, „Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's 7 January Meeting“, *The Virtual Information Centre* 8 January 2002. <http://www.vic-info.org/> (2002).
- ⁴ Sean L. Yom, „Power Politics in Central Asia: The Future of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation“, *Harvard Asia Quarterly* <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiacr/haq/200204/0204a003.htm>
- ⁵ Chjan Tegan. „E Mei Chjunya chjulun Afuhan“, [Russia, America and Central Asia fight behind Afghanistan], *Lyaovan*, 43 p. 62
- ⁶ National Policy Foundation, „An Emerging Face of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization“, 3 September 2003
- ⁷ Johnson, Edward, „China, Russia, Central Asia strengthen ties“, *CDI/Russia Weekly*, 29 May 2003
- ⁸ Solomonova, Olga, „Yuzhniy Shit“, *Trud*, 29 April 2003
- ⁹ Kim, Alexander, „Russia's Asymmetric Response to the US“, *Central Asian Times*, 2 July 2003 <http://www.times.kg/news/1084623.html>
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ Plugataryov, Igor, „Moskve predlozili pokinut' Tadjikistan“, *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozreniye* 35 (350) http://nvo.ng.ru/wars/2003-07-25/2_tadjikistan.html
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Yom, Sean, „Power Politics in Central Asia“, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 26 July 2002
- ¹⁵ Santana, Rebecca, „Russians Fear US Will be in Central Asia for A Long Time“, <http://www.help-for-you.com/news/Jan2002/Jan15/PRT15-31Article.html> *Voice of America*, 15 January 2002
- ¹⁶ Kuzmin, Nikolai, „Tsentrāl'naia Aziia posle operatsii v Afganistane“ *Tsentrāl'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, No. 1 (25), 2003, pp.144 – 158
- ¹⁷ Brzezinski, Zbigniew, „The Grand Chessboard-American Primacy and It's Geostategic Imperatives“, (New York: Basic Books, 1997). p. 30.
- ¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, „United States-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework“, 12 March 2002, www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/8736.htm

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, „Promoting Long-term Stability in Central Asia: U.S. Government Assistance One Year After 9/11“, 27 November 2002, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/15560.htm>

²⁰ Allison, Roy, Johnson, Lena (eds.), „The United States and Central Asia in Central Asian Security: The New International Context, Institute of International Affairs (Sweden: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001), p. 137.

²¹ U.S. Department of State, „U.S. Continues to Promote Human Rights, Democracy in Central Asia“, 27 June 2002, <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/hyper/2002/0627/epf416.htm>

²² Amin, A. H., „US Strategy of Dual Central Position“, Media Monitors Network, 1 July 2003, <http://www.mediamonitors.net/ahamin2.html>

²³ Brzezinski, op.cit., 198.

Resumé:

Muzaffar Z. Munavvarov: *Dynamika bezpečnosti v Strednej Ázii v globálnom kontexte*

Autor príspevku patrí k nastupujúcej generácii analytikov zoskupujúcich sa na Univerzite svetovej ekonomiky a diplomacie v Taškente (UWED – univerzita vychováva nové kádre pre uzbeckú diplomáciu, resp. zahraničnú službu. UWED zaisťuje pre potreby štátnej správy Uzbekistanu tzv. školu diplomacie, ktorá je určená stredným diplomatickým kádom, t. j. po hodnosť prvého tajomníka). Rozhodol sa pre analýzu a porovnanie politiky USA, Ruska a Číny v priestore postsovietskej Strednej Ázie s presahom na celú Centrálnu Áziu.

V úvode svojich poznámok nenásilne pripomína, že po procese sublimácie Sovietskeho zväzu a vzniku geopolitického vákuu sa logicky zmenil charakter a podstata vzťahov medzi globálnymi silami v regióne (v Strednej a Centrálnj Ázii). Záujem týchto subjektov o región sa zvýšil predovšetkým z dvoch dôvodov: geostrategický štatút regiónu a perspektívne zásoby energetických surovín.

Bilaterálne vzťahy USA, Ruska a Číny s jednotlivými (novými) krajinami regiónu sa postupne stali primárnymi komponentmi ich zahraničnej politiky. Samozrejme, neskôr sa do popredia dostali problémy komplexnej bezpečnosti.

Analyzujúc politiku Číny vo vzťahu k regiónu Centrálnj Ázie a jej jednotlivým krajinám autor poznamenáva, že otázky boja proti medzinárodnému terorizmu a náboženskému extrémizmu sa stali aktuálnymi témami aj v rámci bilaterálnych vzťahov.

Podľa názoru autora bol vznik *Šanghajskej organizácie spolupráce* (ŠOS) logickým vyústením spomínanej bilaterálnej spolupráce jednotlivých krajín regiónu s Čínou, samozrejme, s prevahou problému regionálnej bezpečnosti.

Autor venuje pozornosť aj faktu aktívneho prístupu Ruskej federácie k činnosti ŠOS a možnej perspektívnej aliancii Čína - Rusko, ako protiváhy voči USA, ktorých prítomnosť a vplyv sa v teritóriu po tragických udalostiach z 11. septembra 2001 reálne zvýšili.

Čo sa týka úlohy Ruska, autor prichádza k záveru, že v súčasnosti Moskva nemá vypracovanú komplexnú stratégiu vo vzťahu k Strednej Ázii, a teda ani voči regiónu Centrálnej Ázie. Navyše, vzhľadom na politickú a ekonomickú slabosť Rusko nie je schopné byť skutočným garantom bezpečnosti jednotlivých republík regiónu a ani regiónu ako celku.

Pri podrobnejšom hodnotení súčasných regionálnych mechanizmov bezpečnosti akcentuje činnosť *Dohody o kolektívnej bezpečnosti* (na práci ktorej neparticipujú všetky štáty Spoločenstva nezávislých štátov), ktorá by mala ochraňovať záujmy účastníckych štátov pred vojenskými a nevojenskými hrozbami. Tiež sa dotýka známych tém ruských vojenských základní - nových a starých - v Kirgizsku a Tadžikistane.

Politika USA v regióne je podrobená analýze cez prizmu udalostí po septembri 2001, ako aj cez súvzťažnosť americko-ruskej prítomnosti. Tu autor zdôrazňuje dve špecifiká americkej prítomnosti v regióne. Prvým je skutočnosť, že USA sa aktivizovali v Centrálnej Ázii až v rámci reakcie na teroristické útoky na New York a realizáciou následnej vojenskej operácie v Afganistane. Druhým je fakt, že prítomnosť USA predstavuje zo strategického pohľadu zvláštnu a priamu výzvu iným globálnym silám majúcim historicky blízko k regiónu, inak povedané Číne a v danej chvíli slabému Rusku.

Autor textu sa tiež pokúša otvoriť tému ekonomických dividend amerických spoločností - predovšetkým ropných a plynárenských - plynúcich zo strategickej prítomnosti USA v regióne.

Trojuholník USA - Rusko - Čína je v Centrálnej Ázii realitou. Autor si je toho vedomý podobne ako toho, že v rámci tohto trianglu je potrebná harmonizácia vzťahov a hľadanie konštruktívneho dialógu. Rozumná rovnováha síl v regióne sa tak stane očakávaným akceleratorom dynamiky rozvoja vzťahov s regionálnymi a globálnymi faktormi svetovej politiky. V tomto kontexte je veľmi zaujímavé poznanie, že uzbecké elity si to zrejme uvedomujú. Na nedávnom summite prezidentov krajín ŠOS v Taškente

(ŠOS vznikla 14. – 15. júna 2001 v Šanghaji pristúpením Uzbekistanu ku krajinám pôvodnej tzv. Šanghajskej päťky – Rusko, Čína, Kazachstan, Kirgizsko, Tadžikistan), ktorá vznikla v roku 1996, a ktorej cieľom bolo posilnenie vzájomnej dôvery vo vojenskej oblasti a zníženie počtu ozbrojených síl na spoločnej hranici s Čínou. Formálne nová regionálna organizácia si kladie za cieľ rozvoj širokospektrálnej multilaterálnej spolupráce zameranej na zabezpečenie bezpečnosti a stability a na rozvoj obchodno-ekonomických a politických vzťahov. Prioritou ŠOS je boj proti medzinárodnému terorizmu, náboženskému extrémizmu, separatizmu a nelegálnemu obchodu s drogami. Uzbekistan je Ruskom i Čínou považovaný za strategického partnera v Strednej Ázii. Vzhľadom na skutočnosť, že Uzbekistan nemôže byť členom žiadnej vojenskej alebo vojensko-politickej organizácie si jeho vstup vyžiadal zmenu charakteru pôvodnej regionálnej štruktúry. Členstvom Uzbekistanu v ŠOS vzrástol aj jeho geopolitický význam. Prezident I. Karimov počas slávnostnej večere (15. júna 2004) vyhlásil: „... Nehľadiac na vplyv Ruska a váhu USA, Čína je dnes krajinou, bez ktorej sa vo svete nedá nič urobiť...“

Konstruktívny prístup troch komponentov svetovej politiky je výhodný pre región, pre stabilnú stabilitu v stabilne nestabilnom priestore. Autor to síce vo svojich poznámkach priamo neuvádza, ale týka sa to aj európskej, a teda globálnej bezpečnosti. Formálne ďaleko býva niekedy veľmi blízko. Centrálna Ázia je odsúdená na spoluprácu. Konfrontácia uškodí všetkým a v tom nie je v Európe nikto zainteresovaný. Samozrejme, ak sa nevenuje obchodu s drogami alebo ropou...